From the Commissioner of Social Security:

I want to welcome you to our plan for the future. Over the past year, the Social Security Administration launched a tough examination of the state of the Agency today, and of what the next decade is likely to hold for us and for the nation. This Agency Strategic Plan, *Mastering the Challenge,* marks the beginning of SSA's journey to the year 2010.

Challenging forces drive us to look beyond conventional planning horizons. After many decades of public service ranked among the very best, in the year 2000 SSA is an agency acknowledging the strain of demanding of itself the best in performance, while managing the effects of years of constrained resources.

Already under stress, we now deliver service in a present in which customers' expectations are racing higher, as we look ahead to a future that promises an explosion in technology and huge growth in workload as the Baby Boomer generation approaches retirement. We also face the prospect of significant losses in our expert workforce as many dedicated colleagues also retire.

Facing all of this, our drive to excel remains strong. This year we engaged an intense stakeholder dialogue that led us to a vision of service for 2010. This strategic plan flows from that vision, and describes how we will make it reality. And because our commitment to the present is as strong as our conviction about the future, this plan also frames the steps we will take as we move ahead to keep our here and now performance at levels that continue to please the public we serve. Taken together, the *2010 Service Vision* and this strategic plan are our blueprints for meeting the challenges ahead, and keeping SSA among the best.

Our resolve is firm. But the years ahead will not be easy and success will not be up to us alone. We will need resources, capable people to replace those who retire and to handle targeted work, and we will need very substantial investments in technology.

We must be willing to change familiar ways of doing business, while we hold to the values and dedication to public service that have been at the heart of our past success. More than ever, we will need the support of our union and State agency partners.

As we focus on a demanding future, there is much that is instructive in our past. Through the years that Social Security has been central to the nation's economic security the Agency has risen to many challenges. The support of the nation for these vital programs is built on our rich history of dedicated public service and "doing the impossible" over and over again. We know what we can do and what we must do. The American people will not be disappointed.

Kenneth S. Apfel

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Part I -- The Message of this Strategic Plan

As the most successful domestic program in our nation's history, Social Security is fundamental to economic security, and thus contributes to the basic well-being, health and quality of life of the American people. For the beneficiary, family member, neighbor or taxpayer, the presence of Social Security is assurance of a certain economic standard of living for the community and the nation.

Similarly, as the agency charged with managing and delivering these profoundly important programs, for over sixty years the Social Security Administration has ranked among the premier agencies in government for customer service and "can do" spirit. In many communities across the country and to many people, SSA has been the primary face of the federal government, and it is fair to say that Americans have generally viewed the Agency's performance and service with approval.

At the turn of the century, however, it is clear that SSA is an agency under stress. The Agency's pride and flagship, the front line workforce, increasingly struggles to perform at traditionally high service levels, while increasingly burdened by constrained resource levels. At the same time, great new challenges lie ahead that would strain any good organization: the looming Baby Boom workload; technology advancing at warp speed along with customer service expectations; and the loss of expertise and institutional knowledge as our workforce begins to retire in greater numbers. These issues surfaced as constant themes as we began the dialogue to create this strategic plan. Dominating all discussions was the need to create a vision of service in the future---how we will manage to do our work a decade from now.

The *2010 Service Vision,* is summarized later in this document. The Vision grew from demand that it be created, and it is the powerful long-term perspective of the Vision that shapes this strategic plan. In turn, *Mastering the Challenge* describes the dual requirements that SSA prepare itself for a vastly different future, and at the same time keep performance and service at its traditional best. While we must invest in tomorrow, we are committed to staying the ambitious course set in 1997.

With this strategic plan, by 2005 we realize concrete results in improved service for today's customers, strengthened program integrity, and increased public knowledge of our programs. At the same time, with investments in technology, the workforce, and an expanded base of policy analysis, we position the Agency to meet the needs of tomorrow's customers. Highlights and priorities under this plan for the next five years include the following:

Customer Service:

- Improve service to applicants for disability benefits by implementing process changes to allow claims that should be allowed sooner, and to reduce the time it takes for decisions on hearings requests and appeals.

- Increase employment opportunities for beneficiaries with disabilities by implementing the Work Incentives Act.

- Increase and maintain overall customer satisfaction and improve 800 number service through technological enhancements and process changes that enable customers to complete more business at the first point of contact.

- Establish customer feedback systems and measurement tools that give us a better understanding of customer expectations and a fuller picture of the quality of service we are providing.

Program Integrity:

- Improve Supplemental Security Income payment accuracy through continuing efforts to increase real-time access to data sources on income and resources that affect eligibility and payment amount.

- Clear the backlog and stay current in processing Continuing Disability Reviews.

- Increase payoff from efforts to deter, detect and resolve fraud with a continued emphasis on major vulnerabilities to fraud in the SSI program.

Investments for Tomorrow:

- Build a body of data, research and policy analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses in the programs and the effects of proposals for change, particularly in the area of program solvency.

- Prepare for the growing customer demand to conduct business electronically by making most services available electronically or through automated telephone service and integrating communications channels for seamless customer access.

- Develop a workforce and technology infrastructure to support the 2010 Service Vision.

- Increase public knowledge of Social Security programs by continuing to promote awareness of the Social Security Statement and how it can be used to plan a secure financial future, and by tailoring our messages and strategies to educate all Americans about Social Security.

Part II -- The Social Security Programs

Virtually all of SSA's administrative resources are committed to the management of three major programs: the Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program, the Disability Insurance (DI) program, and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. To administer these programs, SSA issues Social Security numbers, maintains earnings records for wage earners and self-employed individuals, takes claims, makes eligibility decisions, maintains the beneficiary rolls, and disseminates information about the programs. SSA has recently broadened its role in providing support services for disabled beneficiaries to return to work, achieve self-sufficiency through steady employment, and no longer be dependent on cash benefits.

In calendar year (CY) 1999, SSA paid out over $391 billion to over 50 million beneficiaries. The purpose and effect of these benefits are significant.

OASDI – The OASI and DI programs are based in Title II of the Social Security Act. As of July 2000, about 45 million people receive Social Security benefits totaling about $33 billion each month. Their benefits replace, in part, the earnings that were lost when a worker retired, became disabled, or died.

Benefits are financed primarily through payroll taxes paid by employees, their employers, and self-employed persons. Almost all jobs are covered by Social Security, meaning that most people are earning income protection for their future along with their paychecks.

Over the years, benefits from the programs that SSA administers have significantly improved the economic well being of the nation. For example, since 1959 the poverty rate among elderly Social Security beneficiaries has declined by 70 percent, largely due to Social Security benefits. In 1998, 47 percent of elderly and non-elderly beneficiaries would have fallen below the Federal poverty threshold without Social Security.

SSI – SSI, based in Title XVI of the Social Security Act, is a means-tested program that pays monthly checks to people who have limited assets and income, and who are 65 or older, blind, or disabled. Under Title XVI, about 6.6 million people receive Federally administered SSI payments totaling $2.7 billion each month. Many States supplement the Federal SSI payment, choosing either to have SSA administer the supplement or to pay it directly. Federal SSI payments are financed from general revenues.

Beneficiaries of the Title XVI program receive monthly Federal payments sufficient to raise their income to a Federally guaranteed level, currently 71 percent of the Federal poverty threshold for an individual and 84 percent of the poverty threshold for couples.

The outcomes of the Social Security and SSI programs are influenced by a wide range of economic and societal factors. Major program changes must be legislated, and legislation arises from issues and solutions identified by the President, the legislators themselves, the Social Security Administration, and others such as individual members of the public, advocacy groups, research organizations, and other government agencies. Absent definite information on future program change, this plan is based on current law.

Part III – Mission, Goals and Values

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SSA's Mission

"To promote the economic security of the nation's people through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's social security programs"

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SSA's Strategic Goals:

To promote valued, strong, and responsive social security programs and conduct effective policy development, research, and program evaluation

To deliver customer-responsive world-class service

To ensure the integrity of Social Security programs, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse

To be an employer that values and invests in each employee

To strengthen public understanding of Social Security programs

SSA's Values:

To treat every individual with equal regard and respect

To act with integrity

To imbue quality in all we do and help others do the same

To remember that courtesy and compassion mean everything

To listen carefully and to act on what we hear

To respect stability and embrace change, keeping what works and changing what could work better

To value diversity

To discharge faithfully our role as guardians of the public trust

To act with this thought in mind: to millions of people, we are "the government"

Part IV -- The Case for a Service Vision

The Boomers are Coming

At no time in the Agency's history has the need for systematic, comprehensive planning for the future been so acute, and so urgent. Looking toward the next decade, SSA faces great certainties---the fast-approaching disability-prone years and retirement age of massive numbers of Baby Boomers, and the advancing retirement of its workforce.

The workload facts can be transformed into simple arithmetic. SSA currently employs about 65,000 Federal employees across the country, working with another 14,000 State Disability Determination Services (DDS) employees throughout the States. Every year this workforce handles many millions of visitors, telephone calls, benefit claims, changes to beneficiary records, wage reports, requests for Social Security cards and other tasks too numerous to detail.

SSA continuously adjusts processes and pursues new initiatives to improve service and program management and efficiency. But under current estimates, by 2010 the demographic shift created by the aging of the Baby Boomers will push growth in disability beneficiaries to something more than 46 percent over today's levels. Retirement beneficiaries will increase by over 15 percent and Supplemental Security Income recipients will increase by about 10 percent. The most diligent incremental management improvements cannot keep SSA from being overwhelmed by that kind of dramatic surge in work.

Traditional work is not the whole story. New mission requirements such as the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 signal expanded responsibilities for the Agency and the workforce. Advances in medical technology suggest both medical and cultural redefinition of the entire concept of disability, and potentially more change for SSA in how it will support the disabled.

Our Workforce

As we calculate it today, if we try to process the Baby Boom work the way we do it now, we would need as many as 20,000 additional workyears by 2010 to maintain current service levels. Meanwhile, SSA's own capable workforce is aging and will begin retiring in greater numbers. By 2010, over 28,000 of the Agency's employees will retire and another 10,000 will leave for other reasons. The retirement wave will create a significant drain on SSA's institutional knowledge.

Based on these projections, between now and 2010 SSA will be faced with replacing over half its current workforce, through a time when attracting and keeping capable, qualified workers will continue to be a national challenge. And SSA will need the best. The Agency is committed to maintaining a diverse workforce that reflects the growing diversity in the national population and can thus be more responsive to the needs of customers with differing social and cultural backgrounds. As national diversity increases, so will our need for language skills to serve the non-English speaking. We are likely to need other new skills to meet our changing responsibilities in serving the disabled. Finally, as customer demand for faster, more convenient service grows, pervasive use of technology will drive an urgent need for workers who continue to build the skills needed to be

comfortable operating in an increasingly complex technological environment.

Technology

In technology the pace of development is swift, promises to be sustained, and is rapidly fueling public expectations and demands for expanded, custom-designed services. While taxpayers are unlikely to argue for luxury in government services, most demand convenience, effectiveness and efficiency, and they may assume that technology is a path to having it all.

The simple fact of coming workloads makes it critical that SSA optimize the efficiencies of technology, and our commitment to good service drives us to deliver the convenience of technology to our customers. The other imperative is public opinion. SSA must continue to demonstrate strong competence in management and keep pace with the "best in business" in order to sustain the public's confidence in the value of the Social Security programs and return on taxpayer investment.

Part V -- The 2010 Service Vision

Principles and Enablers

The Vision of SSA in 2010 is based on six principles of service that characterize and drive the Vision, and eight service enablers that position SSA to meet the resource and workload challenges ahead, and thus to deliver on the promise of service built on the principles.

Service Principles

Customer Choice	Customers have expanded options for service that are broad in terms of the time, place, mode of access, and language.
First Point of Contact	Customers complete their transactions at the first point of contact.
Privacy	Customers have the confidence that SSA collects personal information only as needed for the Government's business and discloses personal information only as allowed by law.
One-stop Government Service	SSA works with other government agencies to move toward providing a wide variety of government services in a single contact.
Proactive Service	SSA ensures contact with hard-to-reach segments of the population, provides an automated application process, and is proactive in researching issues and trends that impact its programs.
Stewardship	SSA safeguards trust fund contributions and tax dollars through effective management and aggressive preventative, investigative, and prosecutorial efforts.

Service Enablers

Technology Enhancements	SSA maximizes use of technology to automate workload and administrative processes to enhance service and to support the fully electronic, paperless processing of its work.
Access to Electronic Records	Customers and employees have access to electronic records, with the necessary security, privacy, and authentication.
Operational Flexibility	SSA's resources are integrated and restructured to provide maximum flexibility in meeting increasing workload and service demands.

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External Alliances	SSA develops strong alliances with government agencies, community-based organizations, tribal governments, and the private sector in areas that benefit SSA and it customers.
Public Communication	SSA's communications activities include using innovative means to ensure that the public has up-to-date knowledge about SSA programs and services.
Internal Working Relationships	SSA has strong working relationships across component lines, with its unions and employee associations.
Employer of Choice	SSA develops, attracts and retains a highly qualified and motivated workforce through enhanced benefits, improved facilities, flexible work arrangements, and increased career opportunities.
Leadership	SSA's executives and managers provide proactive, entrepreneurial, and customer-centered leadership.

The 2010 Service Vision

The following view from 2010 illustrates the principles and enablers of the Vision from three important perspectives: our customers, the Agency's internal work processes, and our employees.

How SSA Serves Its Customers

Service continues to be a central priority of the Agency in 2010. Customers enjoy a broader range of options for service than at any time in the history of the program. While customers still have the option to have an employee complete their transaction, many who want the convenience of technology choose to deal with SSA routinely through the Internet or the automated portion of the toll-free telephone system. These largely self-service and secure methods of service delivery enable customers to conduct much of their business from virtually any place, and at any time.

For customers who need or want more help, SSA's Internet service and toll free number are integrated. Thus, a customer who needs assistance while on-line can reach an employee for help in completing the transaction. Customers can complete their business at the first point of contact, regardless of the mode of access. SSA and DDS employees have access to electronic customer records with a comprehensive history of the customer's previous contacts and pending actions. These employees also have the qualifications and authority to take the completing action.

Technology has not replaced employees or the in-person service for those customers who, for a variety of reasons, require or prefer more personalized service. Substantial numbers of SSA's customers still need or prefer to be served by our local community offices. These customers usually have complex business or difficulty in accessing SSA by other means. Technology is the tool that allows the Agency to focus its field office employees on serving these customers and ensuring the integrity of our programs. Most importantly, it allows the Agency to provide

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the same high level of service to all customers no matter whether they choose to conduct business with SSA in person, over the telephone, or through other electronic means.

The Agency's customers find a diverse workforce representing a broad spectrum of cultures and languages. To help overcome barriers that prevent some customers from accessing our services, SSA depends heavily on the combined efforts of its diverse workforce and innovative alliances with a wide range of Federal, State, and local agencies, tribal governments, community service organizations, and advocacy groups.

As a result of the Agency's efforts to "reach out" to customers through a wide variety of means—traditional in-office service, community networking, direct communications, Internet, automated telephone services, and one-stop shopping— customers in 2010 have an unprecedented degree of connection to SSA in terms of information and services.

How the Agency Performs its Work

In 2010, SSA functions as a service delivery network of traditional local and centralized offices, "virtual offices," Internet access and community contact points, all interconnected into "one Agency." Work is completely portable. Customer telephone calls and Internet (including video) contacts are channeled to facilities anywhere in the SSA network that have the capacity to handle them. The technology infrastructure is robust and provides full connectivity among SSA and DDS facilities.

Work is accomplished through virtually paperless processes and procedures that have been adapted to make the most effective use of technology and the most

efficient use of our human resources. Records are moved and transactions are completed in a secure electronic environment, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the data. Electronic verification of most evidence needed to substantiate claims and make record changes eliminates the need for employees to handle documents and greatly reduces processing time. Expanded, real-time electronic access to data held by others also enables the Agency to greatly reduce and in many cases prevent overpayments. Expert and decision support systems and continuous training opportunities provide tools that help employees ensure work gets done right the first time.

Employees in all locations have appropriate, secure electronic access to comprehensive customer records and use the same intuitive, Web-based applications with built-in decision support that are available to SSA's on-line customers. SSA has expanded the functionality and authority of direct service positions, and employees in 2010 are able to routinely complete business at the customer's first point of contact. Hand-offs and lengthy delays are a distant memory.

The Internet and an integrated toll free telephone system (with sophisticated voice recognition and language translation features) enable millions of customers to complete their business at any time without having to talk to an SSA representative. Identity and authentication are increasingly carried out in a manner transparent to the customer making more services immediately accessible by phone and on-line. In 2010, most RSI claims and a substantial percentage of other transactions are completed electronically via the Internet and toll free telephone system.

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The Agency's basic facilities remain intact in terms of approximate numbers but the nature and mix of work performed in each facility are changed significantly. All SSA direct service facilities offer a full range of services to the public.

Field offices remain an enduring presence in communities across the country. They continue to offer face-to-face service for all customers who prefer that option, but are less involved in RSI intake due to increased use of the Internet and automated application processes and more involved in the more complex disability, SSI, postentitlement, and appeals workloads. In addition, employees today are increasingly involved in fulfilling the Agency's fiduciary, program integrity, and public information responsibilities. Traditional in-person services are strengthened through partnerships with Federal, State and local agencies, tribal governments, community service organizations, and advocacy groups. Field offices also have an expanded role in enhancing one-stop shopping in local communities by helping customers gain access to a variety of government services.

Meanwhile, the program service centers, teleservice centers, and the Office of Central Operations (i.e., ODO, OEO, OIO, and the DOC) have transitioned to full-service operations, responding to the public's growing preference for doing business by telephone or the Internet. Employees who work abroad in international operations are also an integral part of SSA's electronic operating environment.

The Agency's streamlined and automated processes have benefited the DDSs and SSA's hearing and appeals offices as well. Through the use of the electronic folder and electronic medical evidence, videoconferencing, and other technology enhancements, previously complex, labor-intensive processes such as scheduling consultative and vocational experts, reviewing medical evidence, and retrieving case files are greatly improved and shortened.

Headquarters and regional office staffs work in direct support of the entire service delivery network, functioning as expert resources in a variety of areas. Working primarily in cross-functional, cross-component teams, staff provide critical services, including evaluating and streamlining policies and procedures to enhance effective service delivery; developing and enhancing electronic integrated processes; maintaining up-to-date, integrated on-line reference materials; designing training programs; developing effective communications products and strategies; and providing other significant administrative support.

SSA continues to be an effective steward for the American public by keeping the cost of managing Social Security's programs comparable to that of other efficient organizations.

How the Agency Supports its Employees

Ten years after the turn of the century, employees remain the nucleus of the service delivery structure and continue to be recognized as the most capable in government. The Agency's aggressive human resource planning, leading-edge personnel practices and state-of-the-art technology have fully prepared employees to meet the demands of service in 2010. These features, along with innovative recruiting and professional development strategies, make SSA an "employer of choice" in both the public and private sectors.

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While SSA's traditional, customer-centered values have remained constant, in keeping with the changing nature of work, the Agency's workforce is different in 2010. In a setting where most customer business is handled to completion at the first point of contact and work flows automatically to available employees anywhere in the network, employees have very broad rather than narrow expertise. The electronic nature of the work allows employees equipped with portable connective devices to work from any location, including the traditional offices, home, or at community locations as driven by customer service needs. They are well qualified and fully trained to deliver services in all programs and exercise judgment in meeting and satisfying the customer's needs.

Consistent with these more sophisticated skills and complicated work, SSA's workforce is more highly graded than it was in 2000. As employees develop multiple skills and competencies, they take on job responsibilities that entail more complex decision making and independent judgment. Career advancement opportunities are also available in a variety of specialties such as integrity, security, quality, process evaluation, information technology, communications, and management. Through comprehensive training supported by state-of-the art technology and position restructuring, the procedure-driven workforce of the year 2000 has largely transitioned to the entrepreneurial workforce of 2010.

Particularly for in-person service, employees are increasingly involved in disability program work, including providing employment assistance to individuals with disabilities. The Agency's focus on the front-end of the disability processes (that flowed from SSA's disability redesign and prototype initiatives) required a corresponding investment in the SSA and DDS employees involved in those processes; both workforces needed to be higher skilled and compensated.

SSA develops, retains, and attracts a highly qualified and motivated workforce by wisely investing in its employees. Enhanced benefits, improved facilities, flexible work arrangements, and increased career and training experiences create an environment where employees have unprecedented opportunities to contribute, learn, and grow.

SSA's personal growth-oriented and flexible working environment positions the Agency to effectively compete for and retain skilled employees. An expanded recruiting focus enables us to attract not only top college graduates, but also talent from non-traditional recruitment sources, including applicants interested either in long- or short-term careers. This expanded recruiting focus gives SSA a more diverse workforce than ever.

SSA's diverse workforce strengthens the Agency's service delivery platform as a result of a broadened language capability, cultural insights, and a deeper understanding of customers. This is particularly true in the case of the Agency's employees with disabilities. Leading its return-to-work initiatives by example, SSA's employees with disabilities give the Agency a unique perspective on improving service to disabled customers.

In 2010, SSA's labor-management partnership is substantially strengthened. Leadership from SSA's management, the unions, and employee and management associations have been instrumental in developing and implementing the human resources and technological innovations that

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have taken place over the last decade. Partnership is working in SSA at levels of trust, collegiality, and effectiveness that would have been difficult to imagine ten years earlier, and is acknowledged as a key contributor to the Agency's success.

Implications of the Vision

The 2010 Service Vision is based on this fundamental premise: as the preference for service geared to individual convenience and familiarity with technology converge in the generations approaching retirement age, SSA can capitalize on these emerging trends to deal with workload growth, offer more satisfying service choices, and concentrate the frontline workforce on improving quality, program integrity, and personal service for customers who continue to want or need it. The premise itself is based on three critical assumptions:

- SSA will receive annual resource increases sufficient to fund its current baseline;

- Resources will be added to the baseline in time and amounts needed to support the workforce and technology infrastructure investments described in the next chapter; and,

- We will be successful in combining technology and security development, and in attracting substantial numbers of customers to electronic service options.

On this last assumption, the full 2010 Service Vision includes more detailed projections of the business changes we must achieve to realize the Vision. Those estimates are intended to illustrate the approximate degree and combination of change we will need, and are not meant to describe exact outcomes that we cannot rationally predict at this time. However, the estimates are based on the reality that resources are not unlimited, and since we must meet coming challenges with that in mind, service enhancements must also incorporate efficiencies.

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Part VI -- Critical Infrastructure Investments: IT and HR, Principle Enablers of the 2010 Vision

The key to attaining SSA's Vision for 2010 lies in our ability to react to the challenges of the next decade by rethinking the way we do business and developing innovative ways to manage workplace changes, increased customer expectations, and growing workloads. The principle enablers of this strategy will be critical infrastructure investments in a highly skilled workforce and information technology (IT). Given all that we know about the challenges ahead of us, it is clear that SSA must begin making significant investments in its human resources and information technology infrastructure immediately.

Human Resources and Information Technology Working Together

Ironically, the greatest challenge of human resources management involves developing technology capable workers, and the greatest challenges of information technology management are the human issues. We have come to an understanding that technology projects often fail for non-technological reasons. They may fail, for example, because employees are not ready to work in the new ways required. This may be due to poor communications or lack of training or motivation. Therefore, whether or not we overcome the business challenges that IT systems are meant to address depends on human relationships and interactions as much as on the technology itself. Our IT infrastructure must be designed to provide all SSA/DDS employees with the tools needed to respond to changing workforce demands. By the same token, HR must be familiar with and able to use new systems and technologies successfully. It must also

be positioned to assist the entire workforce to do the same.

Our IT and HR infrastructures must converge to meet the challenges ahead. SSA's 2010 Vision, and this strategic plan depend heavily on the premise that HR and IT will work together to deliver human services on the one hand, and design information systems around human talents on the other. Technology will let us work more efficiently; HR will sustain that efficiency by facilitating the growth of a flexible workforce capable of dealing with change. Technology will change the nature of our work, altering the services that HR must deliver. HR will help to develop a technologically capable workforce that can use IT effectively.

Human Resources Infrastructure

Our workforce has been a critical component of all our past successes. Without it we could not be the service oriented organization that we are recognized to be. Now, the global economic, labor, technology and social trends identified in our 2010 Vision suggest that an even greater emphasis on our human resources infrastructure is crucial to our continued success. Only the aggressive retooling of our workforce practices will allow us to maintain our strong tradition of service.

Overcoming Obstacles – Critical Investments in HR

SSA will face a number of substantial obstacles in developing its new HR infrastructure for the future. For example, we must address the significant drain on

institutional knowledge that will result from the loss of staff through retirement and other attrition. We must also deal with the change in the nature of the work that we do, as well as the challenge of becoming an employer of choice in an increasingly competitive human resource environment.

To overcome the potential loss of institutional knowledge, SSA has developed a strategy to ease the impact of the "retirement wave." The strategy includes succession planning, updating recruitment plans, updating training methods and developing a human resources plan.

Realizing this strategy will require critical investments such as:

- Hiring replacement employees in advance of known losses to allow the experienced employees to mentor new hires and pass on institutional knowledge before they leave.
- Providing expert and knowledge management systems.
- Establishing an expanded mentoring program.

Dealing with the changing nature of our work will require a more flexible and diverse workforce to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers, the ability to conduct business in a variety of service delivery modes and locations, and a broader range of employee skills. Employees will have broader responsibilities and will be expected to provide the full range of direct services to the customer. It is essential that the Agency provide the tools and support employees will need--such as decision support systems and immediately accessible technical staff--in order to excel in an increasingly varied and complex electronic work environment.

This change in the nature of the work will require critical investments for:

- Increasing the training we provide employees in a variety of areas, including program and process changes, technology, and analytical skills.
- Restructuring current direct service jobs and providing developmental opportunities, mentoring and technical support to transition current employees into the new positions.
- Expanding our recruiting focus to provide a more diverse workforce that has broadened language capability and has a better understanding of its customer base.
- Developing knowledgeable staff to provide service to the non-English speaking and support to disabled customers requiring special services in order to return to work.
- Increasing staff devoted to working with advocacy and community groups to improve the delivery of service to segments of the population who have difficulty accessing our services.
- Preparing employees to meet customer expectations of faster, more convenient service through the use of technology.

To become an employer of choice that develops, attracts, and retains a highly qualified and motivated workforce, SSA must make critical investments that will:

- Enhance benefits,
- Improve facilities,
- Develop flexible work arrangements, and
- Increase training and career development opportunities.

SSA's HR infrastructure will allow resources to be integrated and restructured to provide maximum flexibility in meeting increasing workload and service demands. This will help to ensure that the organizational structure is aligned to correspond with improved operations. The Agency must maintain strong working relationships across component lines, and with its unions and employee associations; relationships that reflect a spirit of inclusion, cooperation and collegiality, as well as the Agency's core values. SSA's executives and managers must provide proactive, entrepreneurial and customer-centered leadership that is also focused on developing our human capital resources.

Information Technology Infrastructure

For SSA, the Information Age has become a business reality. All of our work is becoming more knowledge intensive. The expansion of our high performance business processes and the delivery of services in an innovative manner depend heavily on information sharing. Therefore, our continued success in delivering outstanding customer service and closing the gap between resources and workloads will depend directly on our ability to create even better information management systems. In other words, SSA must continue to develop a robust IT infrastructure to support productive decision-making.

The vision of SSA's IT infrastructure in 2010 establishes that our information technology systems must have a number of concrete characteristics. First, they must allow us to share information across business functions, throughout the organization and with outside entities. The infrastructure will evolve into an agency-wide IT architecture with standards and

guidelines that will facilitate connectivity and inter-operability. Second, our IT assets will not only be shared, they will also be capable of use and reuse in different ways. The IT infrastructure will enable flexible business processes and adapt to customer expectations. That infrastructure will be geared to delivering applications, but it will also provide the platform for business change and new business initiatives. By being quickly adaptive to customer expectations and making IT capabilities available where and when needed, our IT infrastructure will allow us to realize our technology-enabled vision of the future.

A third major characteristic of SSA's IT infrastructure will be its emphasis on helping SSA to bridge the gap between knowing what to do and knowing how to do it. Rather than continuing to focus on the technical and operational details, our IT systems will guide us in a more strategic direction and allow us to manage toward our future. "Knowledge management" will help to capture the knowledge and experience of our departing employees, build upon and open up new learning opportunities for current employees, and assist us in making the right decisions for the public we serve.

Technology Investments and Initiatives – A New IT Model

In order to maximize the use of technology, and automate workload and administrative processes, SSA must make additional investments. The cost of some of these investments will be offset by productivity gains and where appropriate, our business processes will be redesigned to gain additional efficiencies. However, realizing the promises of the 2010 Vision - creating the capability to respond to increasing workloads, improving business processes, meeting customer demand - will require that

our Information Technology System budget be increased substantially.

SSA is developing a separate technology strategy that makes provisions for periodic refreshment of the infrastructure and the purchase of new hardware and software on a three-year cycle. These enhancements are needed to allow customer access to Social Security services over the Internet while simultaneously improving services delivered via telephone and face-to-face. The technology strategy will outline both the dollar and work-year investments needed in greater detail. These investments will allow SSA to conduct its business in accordance with a new operating model, one that maximizes our ability to leverage technology in order to improve productivity and meet the demands of the future.

The Electronic Workplace

SSA's IT infrastructure will allow work to be handled electronically, in a paperless and wireless environment. Records will be accessed and verified electronically and customers will interact with us via integrated secure channels that ensure their privacy. Manual tasks will be automated, as the use of technology becomes seamless and transparent. Employee skills and performance will be enhanced as training will be made available online. The wide availability of a variety of technologies and the adaptation of policies for paperless processes that make the best use of human resources will lead to the creation of a

"virtual workplace." The goal of all of these improvements will be to drive the organizational capability for change and flexibility.

Customer-centric Environment

The ultimate goal of electronic government is to continually improve customer service while maintaining efficiency. The new IT infrastructure will allow our customers (the public and our business partners) to make choices about how, where and when they will work with us in the regular course of business. As the channels of interaction converge, our customers will have the option of using the Internet, telephone or direct face-to-face encounters and moving from one mode of service delivery to another. At the same time that business is conducted in a manner that is adaptable to customer preferences, it will be conducted more quickly and reliably.

Human Resources Orientation

Technology will not replace employees, but it will give them the tools and support needed to handle higher volumes of increasingly complicated work. SSA's IT infrastructure will be geared toward addressing the impending wave of retirements by developing an online learning environment that will open up training and career development opportunities, promoting knowledge management, streamlining workloads, and creating highly accessible operational data stores.

Part VII – SSA's Strategic Goals and Objectives

"Keeping the Promise," our first strategic plan published under the Government Performance and Results Act, provided a solid foundation for this Agency Strategic Plan. We believe the five strategic goals established in 1997 continue to be the right ones for today. However, we have reworded our third strategic goal to make clear that its focus is on our program integrity and stewardship responsibilities.

We have reexamined our supporting strategic objectives and the strategies for achieving them. Some have been renewed and some have been adjusted in consideration of our performance experience over the past three years. New objectives and strategies have been added to sharpen our focus and mark our interim progress in the areas that are key to realizing the 2010 Vision. We believe these supporting objectives and strategies are the right mix for accomplishing concrete results for today's customers and for positioning the Agency to meet the needs of tomorrow's customers.

Strategic Goal: To promote valued, strong, and responsive social security programs and conduct effective policy development, research, and program evaluation

The ultimate outcome of this goal is for SSA to help create programs that meet the needs of varied constituents today and adapt to the changing needs of constituents tomorrow. The potential scope of issues facing SSA is enormous, including the role of social security programs in income security and prevention of poverty, the role of other legs of the income security stool (i.e., savings, pensions, etc.), and the effects of demographic and economic changes on the ability of the programs to perform their functions of providing an adequate base of economic security and protecting vulnerable populations.

This strategic goal reflects the Agency's responsibility to help shape the dialogue and options for addressing critical long and short-term social security issues and to continually assess program performance in the context of societal trends.

Leadership in shaping the programs cannot be achieved without expertise. With this goal, SSA will strengthen its research, policy analysis and evaluation capabilities in recognition that these capabilities are essential to the development of creative and responsive policy solutions.

Objectives

1. Promote policy changes, based on research, evaluation and analysis, that shape the OASI and DI programs in a manner that takes account of future demographic and economic challenges, provides an adequate base of economic security for workers and their dependents, and protects vulnerable populations.

2. Promote policy changes, based on research, evaluation and analysis, that shape the SSI program in a manner that protects vulnerable populations,

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anticipates the evolving needs of SSI populations, and integrates SSI benefits with other benefit programs to provide a safety net for aged, blind, and disabled individuals.

3. Promote policy changes, based on research, evaluation and analysis, that shape the disability program in a manner that increases self-sufficiency and takes account of changing needs, based on medical, technological, demographic, job market, and societal trends.

4. Provide information for decisionmakers and others on the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs through objective and responsive research, evaluation, and policy development.

Key External Factors and Major Management Challenges

Many external factors drive the need for changes to the structure of social security programs. New patterns of work and earnings, marriage and divorce, child-bearing, and life-expectancy are changing the characteristics of American families. Medical and technological advances that permit disabled individuals to remain in or rejoin the workforce are altering the concept of disability. Changes such as these require the Agency to re-examine the policies that guide our programs.

Demographic changes create the most critical need for program change--to ensure the long-term funding of Social Security programs. Projections of the effects that the baby boom, subsequent baby bust generations, and increased longevity will have on program income and outgo indicate that under current law, SSA would only be able to pay 72 percent of benefit amounts to

its beneficiaries beginning in the year 2037. As the debate moves forward on how best to strengthen Social Security for the future, SSA must work to ensure that the policymakers and public have the information needed to assess the implications of all the proposals under consideration.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

Strategies that Crosscut Program Objectives

- *Seek options for simplification of SSA's programs.* In developing proposals for simplification, we will consider both the need for clear comprehensible programs and the need to maintain program integrity and ensure program rules treat beneficiaries equitably and provide adequate benefits. Additionally, as the Agency assesses proposals for policy change, we will consider the impact on program complexity.

Strategies for Promoting OASDI Program Changes

- *Analyze effects of OASDI programs on different populations and develop options for policy changes where needed.* We will identify strengths and weaknesses in the programs' abilities to provide an adequate base of economic security for all Americans, with special focus on economically vulnerable individuals and families. We will also study the characteristics of people receiving disability benefits so that decisionmakers may better understand factors influencing the need for these benefits.

- *Analyze the effects of demographic and economic trends on Social Security*

programs and develop proposals to address potential weaknesses. Our analyses will examine major factors that influence overall retirement wealth, such as labor force participation, pensions, savings, and other unearned income. We will also identify areas of program vulnerability, describe the problems and experiences of other countries, and discuss models for change utilized in the international community.

● *Provide policymakers with comprehensive analyses of the distributional and fiscal impact of specific proposals to alter Social Security programs.* These analyses will help decisionmakers refine and evaluate proposals by informing them of the potential effects on vulnerable populations, the solvency of Social Security trust funds, and the economy of the United States.

Strategies for Promoting SSI Program Changes

● *Examine ways in which the SSI program may provide better support* for beneficiaries and in which SSI policies may be changed or benefits may be coordinated with other governmental programs. We will also study how changes in OASDI programs, changes in SSI eligibility criteria, and receipt of other sources of income and support affect the SSI program's ability to provide an effective safety net for vulnerable populations.

● *Provide policymakers with quantitative research on children with disabilities for use in proposing future policy changes.* The Childhood Disability Survey will evaluate the effect of the loss of SSI benefits stemming from provisions of

the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 on children and their families. It also will gather information about the cost of caring for a disabled child, the uses of SSI benefits, availability of alternative sources of care, and other information.

● *Analyze options for SSI program simplification.* Our analyses and proposals will take into account the tensions that can occur between simplification, benefit equity, cost, and program integrity.

Strategies for Promoting Disability Program Changes

● *Conduct the National Study of Health and Activity (NSHA), formerly the Disability Evaluation Study.* This extensive survey will provide information on the size of the population potentially eligible for disability now and in the near future and the accommodations and interventions that permit some persons meeting SSA's definition of disability to continue to work. We will use this information to help us develop ways to assist others to remain in the labor force rather than seek benefits and also to assess the impact of changes in the disability decision process.

● *Develop a methodology for validating SSA's medical listings.* Our current system of determining eligibility for disability benefits presumes that persons who meet medical listings are severely disabled and unable to work. The project to validate medical listings will develop a methodology to help us monitor and evaluate the listings.

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- *Evaluate Return-to-Work Strategies.* The Agency will evaluate several strategies to encourage return-to-work among persons with disabilities, including the Ticket-to-Work, a $1 for $2 benefit offset, pharmacological and psychological treatment of beneficiaries with affective disorders, and State projects to integrate current service delivery systems to increase employment.

Strategies for Strengthening Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development

- *Expand information available from outside sources for decisionmakers* and others on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income. SSA will continue to encourage external research and elicit advice from public policy experts outside SSA through partnering, grants, contracts, interagency agreements, and task orders.

- *Strengthen our ability to model future trends and the implications of program changes.* SSA is developing several projection models to increase the scope of reforms that we can evaluate, expand the range of income sources that we can assess, and improve the reliability of our estimates.

- *Promote increased use of SSA program data for research.* We will modify some of our Federal systems of record to allow greater access to benefit and SSN application records for research, and redesign our policy web site to make it easier to use.

- *Expand Policy Net, a communications structure* that allows SSA users to request and receive policy clarifications and collaborate in development of policy changes. Policy Net enables policymakers to work more closely with users and other stakeholders to ensure we have well thought-out, well coordinated policy and the highest quality policy materials.

How We Will Measure Results

We will measure our performance in promoting policy changes that shape valued, strong, and responsive programs by the extent to which we provide critical information for use by decisionmakers, rather than by program outcomes themselves.

A wide range of conditions and decisions beyond SSA's control influence the outcomes of the Social Security and SSI programs. Still, we recognize the need for information on how our programs, in combination with many related factors, affect the economic well being of the public. SSA has developed "barometer" measures (see Appendix A) to provide an indication of the efficacy of the OASDI and SSI programs. SSA will use these measures to provide information about populations served by Social Security programs and help identify areas where the programs may be strengthened.

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
OASDI	• Outputs in the form of research, evaluations, policy analysis and options for program change
SSI	• Outputs in the form of research, evaluations, policy analysis and options for program change
Disability	• Outputs in the form of research, evaluations, policy analysis and options for program change
Research and Evaluation	• Percent of customers assigning a high rating to the quality of SSA's research and analysis products in terms of accuracy, reliability, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness • Percent of major statistical products that are timely

Program Evaluations

Evaluations Used to Inform Strategic Direction

Program evaluation is an evolutionary process. Many of the initiatives described in this plan are an outgrowth of past research and evaluation efforts. For example, the evaluation of proposals to address long-term solvency has led us to focus further analyses on the effects of the OASI programs and changes to the programs on certain segments of the population - women, minorities, economically vulnerable individuals and families, and DI and SSI beneficiaries. SSA continues to build upon its body of program data, research and policy analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses in the programs, as well as to evaluate the potential impact of proposals for change and the actual effects of proposals after they are enacted and implemented.

Future Evaluations

The following table displays the major program evaluations planned for the 2001-2005 period.

EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
Evaluation of Changing Benefit Structures	Evaluates the distributional impact of changing OASI benefits	Ongoing
Welfare Reform and Children with Disabilities	Evaluates the effect of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 on SSA's childhood disability workloads and program costs	Initial report: 2001 Final report: 2003

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National Study on Health and Activity	Estimates the potentially eligible disabled populations and assesses interventions that enable continued work effort among the disabled	2003
Ticket Evaluation	Evaluates the effectiveness of the "ticket" provisions of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA)	Major reports: 2005, 2007
State Partnership Evaluation	Evaluates the effects of demonstration projects to assist States in developing integrated employment services for disabled beneficiaries	Preliminary results: 2002 Final results: 2004
Affective Disorders Treatment Demonstration	Assesses the impact of pharmacological and psychological treatment on the capacity to work of beneficiaries who have affective disorders	2005

Responsive Programs

Strategic Goal: To deliver customer-responsive, world-class service

Virtually everyone in the nation has been or will become a customer of SSA at some point in their lives. This goal is directed specifically toward the way we deliver service to the people who conduct business with SSA.

By committing to "world-class" service, we mean to provide service that is equal or superior to that provided anywhere in the public or private sector. In defining world-class service, we look first to our customers to determine what they desire most from our service. We then balance their feedback with necessary resource considerations and other competing mission responsibilities to set our service objectives. We express our outcomes for this goal both in terms of overall customer satisfaction and the business results we aim to achieve for our customers in response to their needs and preferences.

SSA has distinct customer groups with different needs and expectations. Our current performance levels also vary by group. To help us ensure more even service across our diverse customer base, we have added objectives to define business results for other major customer segments besides applicants for benefits—customers filing for SSN cards, customers requesting appeals and customers having changes in circumstances that affect their benefits. Another new objective under this goal addresses our broadened service mission to provide employment support to our disability beneficiaries.

We also have revised our objectives to emphasize a balanced, holistic approach to managing our performance. Accuracy and timeliness are both important aspects of service. To make explicit the need for balance between the two, our objectives define business results for both attributes. And, because our ability to provide high quality service depends so heavily on making economical use of our limited resources, our objectives also recognize efficiency as an important business result.

Objectives

1. By 2002 and beyond, have 9 out of 10 customers rate SSA's overall service as "good," very good," or excellent," with most rating it as "excellent."

2. By 2005, make 60 percent of SSA's customer-initiated services available to customers either electronically via the Internet or through automated telephone service, and provide the customer interacting with SSA on the Internet with the option of communicating with an SSA employee while online.

3. Increase electronic access to information needed to serve SSA customers. Specifically by 2005:
   - Establish electronic access to human services and unemployment information with 90 percent of States,
   - Establish electronic access to vital statistics and other material information with 50 percent of States,
   - Increase electronic access to information held by other Federal

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Agencies, financial institutions and medical providers.

4. Maintain the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of service to customers applying for OASI and SSI aged benefits. Specifically by 2005:
   ● Have the capacity to take and process 99 percent of OASI and SSI aged claims in a paperless environment.

5. Improve the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of service to customers applying for DI and SSI disability benefits. Specifically by 2005:
   ● Increase the accuracy rate to 95 percent for denials of disability benefits,
   ● Maintain the accuracy of initial disability claims decisions to allow benefits at 96.5 percent,
   ● Issue initial disability claims decisions in an average of 105 days, with at least 70 percent issued within 120 days,
   ● Have the capacity to take 99 percent of disability claims in an electronic environment.

6. Improve the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of service to customers requesting hearings or appeals. Specifically by 2005:
   ● Increase accuracy of hearings decisions to 90 percent,
   ● Issue hearings decisions in an average of 166 days, with at least 70 percent issued within 180 days,
   ● Increase productivity to122 hearings decisions issued per workyear,
   ● Have the capacity to take 99 percent of hearings requests in an electronic environment,
   ● Issue decisions on appeals of hearings in an average of 90 days,

with at least 70 percent issued within 105 days,
   ● Increase productivity to 323 appeals decisions on appeals of hearings issued per workyear.

7. By 2005, increase by 100 percent from 1999 levels, the number of SSDI and SSI disability beneficiaries who achieve steady employment and no longer receive cash benefits.

8. Improve or maintain the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of service to postentitlement (PE) [1] customers. Specifically by 2005:
   ● Have the capacity to take and process 99 percent of PE actions in a paperless environment.

   (*Because PE activities are so varied in scope, we are unable to set a single numeric objective for our overall performance. To help us better serve our PE customers, we will develop a set of performance goals and indicators for the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of PE services that best represents overall Agency performance.*)

9. Maintain through 2005 the accuracy, timeliness and efficiency of service to customers applying for Social Security numbers and replacement cards.

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[1] SSA provides a broad range of services for current beneficiaries to update their records for material changes in circumstances. Examples of these services, referred to as "postentitlement (PE)" work, include changes of address, benefit recomputations, check non-receipt claims and status changes due to marriage, death and other events. (SSA performs other PE work to ensure program integrity that is addressed under the next strategic goal.)

Key External Factors and Major Management Challenges

A multitude of external factors affects our ability to deliver world-class service. The most notable trends are the aging of America, the rapid pace of technological change and a continuing environment of scarce government resources. We will experience unprecedented workload growth over this decade as the baby boom generation reaches their disability-prone years and then retirement age. At the same time, we face a loss of knowledge and experience as many of our employees retire. As business practices change with technology, so too will customer expectations about what constitutes good service and preferences about how they want to interact with us. Yet, amidst all this change, the government fiscal environment makes it unlikely that our resources will grow at a rate that is commensurate with the growth in our workloads.

The convergence of these factors poses a major challenge to SSA for delivering high quality service to the public in the latter part of this decade. To illustrate the magnitude of the challenge, SSA could require as much as a 15,000 - 20,000 increase in our workforce to manage the workloads projected in 2010 if we continued to do business as usual. Addressing the challenge demands that we begin *now* to make changes in our business processes and use of technology, along with investments in our workforce and information technology infrastructure, to meet the needs of tomorrow's customers. We also may need to supplement our strategies with additional resources to the extent that our best efforts to reduce the cost of delivering service cannot entirely bridge the gap between workload growth and current resource levels.

In the near-term, improving the disability claims process (at all decision levels--initial, hearing and appeal) remains a significant challenge to SSA and one of our highest priorities. Lengthy processing times have led to lower levels of satisfaction for our disability customers than for other customer groups. Today, disability claims and appeals consume about 48 percent of SSA's resources. The expected growth in disability work over the coming years, coupled with our expanded responsibilities to provide employment support services, makes the need ever more pressing to reduce the time and cost to process disability claims.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

Process Change and Technology Enhancements

- *Accelerate the redesign and automation of processes* to eliminate steps that add no value and to gain optimum customer service improvements and benefits.

- *Study the impact of eliminating the paper reconsideration step in all processes.*

- *Aggressively develop, provide and successfully market 24/7 access to a full range of services over the Internet and through enhanced automated toll free telephone services.* In addition to providing more convenient access for our customers, electronic service will reduce costs by enabling them to conduct business with less need for employee assistance. Initially customers will be able to download instructions and forms and send information to us electronically. As we are able to put in place appropriate safeguards to authenticate identity and ensure the privacy and security of information maintained in our electronic records,

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customers will have the capability to fully transact their business online.

- *Enhance toll free telephone service by improving call distribution and routing, and develop voice recognition and real-time language translation capability.* User-friendly automated software will replicate normal conversation and will afford callers access to their customer service record to update or change certain information without the need for employee assistance.

- *Develop user-friendly expert decision support and on-line reference systems* with the latest processing instructions, policies, and procedures to assist employees in providing accurate and timely service.

- *Offer customers the option of receiving notices electronically* in a wide variety of languages. SSA will develop additional notice options for customers with disabilities through such means as video notices via voice synthesis for the visually impaired.

- *Create an infrastructure that supports multiple modes of video-conferencing* for a wide range of applications, e.g., customer interviews, hearings, claimant conferences, interoffice meetings and consultations, and training.

Expanded Access to Electronic Records

- *Aggressively pursue real-time electronic verification of specific information needed to serve SSA customers.* An integral part of the entitlement process will allow automatic verification of information drawn from States and other federal agencies. The ability to electronically verify entitlement factors

will result in more accurate benefit determinations, streamline the claims intake process, save employee and customer time, provide enhanced customer service, reduce the use of paper, and save the expenses related to paper handling and postage.

- *Develop systems and processes for obtaining medical and financial evidence electronically.*

- *Establish electronic folders that include comprehensive customer records.* The electronic folder will be accessible by authorized SSA or DDS employees from any location and enable employees to fully respond to a customer's request at the first point of contact. In addition to increasing customer satisfaction, first-point-of-contact will increase efficiency by eliminating hand-offs and callbacks.

- *Develop agreements and processes so that customers can authorize SSA to provide secure electronic verification* of their SSN or other specific information to States and other entities.

Increased Operational Flexibility

- *Develop expanded functionality of field offices, program centers, teleservice centers, and the Office of Central Operations.* SSA will develop ways to move toward handling a full range of workloads in each of these operating facilities, including toll-free telephone calls and Internet services. These enhanced facilities will form a dynamic, integrated, highly flexible and customer-driven service-delivery network.

- *Pursue restructuring of existing direct service positions.* SSA will improve customer service by restructuring its

existing direct service positions. The redesign and automation of work processes, expert and decision support systems, and on-line up-to-date reference materials will enable employees in new positions to provide a full range of services in all programs.

● *Expand normal business hours for direct customer contact for all services* as driven by customer demand and with consideration of employee availability.

Management Information and Evaluation Strategies

● *Develop a comprehensive quality improvement strategy* to review and restructure all business processes to support the effective integration of process evaluation across component lines. The quality improvement strategies will focus on increased in-line review, new and accurate measures of customer service that reflect a balanced emphasis on quality and quantity, meaningful and timely feedback on performance for managing at local levels and support for adequate training and tools.

● *Develop integrated management information systems* that accurately capture the work that we do and the services we provide. The systems will provide tools for analyzing information and anomalies to improve work processes and to enhance management of work at all levels of the Agency. Unit cost information will be developed to help us make better resource allocation decisions and evaluate whether our process and technology changes are producing the intended efficiencies at the Agency level.

● *Enhance our comprehensive market measurement program* for gathering information about our customers' needs and expectations. SSA collects information specific to each major customer group and to each major mode of service delivery–in-office visits, local telephone service, 800 number service and Internet service. We will consult with private sector organizations to learn how best to collect and use customer service information and set our service standards.

● *Reassess our 800 number service standards* by benchmarking large call center operations in private industry to determine how they measure the quality of the 800 number service and adapt relevant findings for SSA use.

External Alliances

● *Support "hassle-free" one-stop shopping* by working with Federal, State and local agencies to effectively integrate governmental services, share information, and support similar outcomes through collocation of offices, standardization of data and documentation requirements, improved interagency communications and integrated toll free telephone and Internet services.

● *Work with other agencies and organizations to provide public access to services via the Internet.*

● *Partner with community service organizations and advocacy groups.* Expanded alliances, along with a more diverse workforce, will strengthen SSA's ability to deliver service to hard-to-reach segments of the population and overcome cultural, language and other

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barriers that prevent some customer from accessing our services.

- *Establish strategic partnerships with the private sector to leverage knowledge and experience in technological areas* such as biometrics, security, wireless networking and knowledge management.

Strategies Specific to Improving Service to OASI Applicants

- *Aggressively pursue systems and policy changes that will lead to an expedited retirement and survivors initial claims process.* The Agency will begin development of automated application processes by focusing first on two key events—attainment of retirement age and electronic notification of death. The expedited retirement initial claims process will be an integral part of the Social Security Statement.

Strategies Specific to Improving Service to Disability Applicants

- *Make changes to the initial disability claims process focused on improving the quality of decisions and paying claims that should be paid as early as possible.* Planned changes will enhance case development and documentation, increase claimant involvement in the process, revise decisionmaking roles for the disability examiner and medical consultant and eliminate the reconsideration step.

- *Redesign the disability quality assurance system* to promote high quality, uniform and consistent decisionmaking through all levels of the process.

- *Determine the benefits of establishing a new Disability Claims Manager position*

to serve as a single point of contact for the claimant throughout the initial disability claims process and implement as appropriate.

- *Implement nationally a paperless disability claims folder,* to electronically collect, manage and share all essential claims information, including medical evidence, across all components involved in the disability process, from the initial claim through the final level of appeal.

- *Make changes to the hearings and appeals processes focused on reducing processing time and improving efficiency.* Hearings process changes include a national workflow model, group-based accountability and enhanced automation and data collection. Appeals process changes include short-term measures, such as case screening and expedited decisionmaking, as well as long-range proposals, such as restructuring and IT improvements designed to enhance service to the public by improving the timeliness of case processing at the Appeals Council.

- *Expand the use of video teleconferencing* to conduct hearings among Administrative Law Judges and claimants, representatives and expert witnesses at other locations.

Employment Assistance Strategies

- *Implement provisions of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (TWSSP).* These include: providing tickets to beneficiaries to receive vocational rehabilitation, employment and other support services from a network of approved providers,

dedicating specially trained field personnel to assist beneficiaries in accessing employment support services, establishing cooperative agreements with our partners in the disability community to provide counseling on the array of support services available to beneficiaries who want to work and expanding public access to information about Social Security programs that encourage work.

- *Expand eligibility for health care coverage* to working disabled people through collaboration with the Health Care Financing Administration, the States and other Federal agencies.

- *Test ways of providing integrated services at the State and local levels to help beneficiaries with disabilities to work* in partnership with the States, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor .

- *Test proactive ways for helping young SSI disabled beneficiaries transition from school to work* in partnership with the Presidential Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities.

Strategies Specific to Improving Service to Postentitlement Customers

- *Complete redesign of the Title II processing system and implementation of a paperless processing system* to enable employees to process virtually all postentitlement record changes in an online, interactive mode.

Strategies Specific to Improving Service to SSN Applicants

- *Reexamine the enumeration* process to determine how best to balance our commitment to assign numbers quickly and accurately to individuals who need them with our commitment to ensure the integrity of the SSN.

- *Work with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of State to implement an enumeration-at-entry pro*gram to allow non-citizens to apply for an SSN as a part of the immigration process.

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How We Will Measure Results

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Customer Satisfaction:	• Customer satisfaction ratings • Employer satisfaction ratings • 800# access rate and accuracy indicators (to be used pending results of a benchmarking study of indicators used in the private sector to measure the quality of 800# service) • Indicators for field office telephone service to be developed • Office waiting times

Internet/Automated Telephone Services:	• % of SSA's customer-initiated services available to customers either electronically via the Internet or through automated telephone service • Progress in establishing the capability for customers interacting with SSA on the Internet to communicate with an SSA employee while online
Electronic Access to Information:	• % States with which SSA has electronic access to human services and unemployment information • % States with which SSA has electronic access to vital statistics and other material information • Progress in increasing electronic access to information held by other Federal Agencies, financial institutions and medical providers
Service to OASI and SSI Aged Applicants:	• % of OASI claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days from effective filing date, if later • % of SSI aged claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days from effective filing date, if later • Accuracy indicators to be developed • Efficiency indictors to be developed • Progress in establishing paperless processing capability
Service to Disability Applicants:	• % initial disability claims decisions issued within 120 days • Average initial disability claims processing time • Initial denial and allowance decision accuracy rates • Efficiency indicator to be developed • Progress in establishing paperless processing capability
Service to Customers Requesting Hearings and Appeals:	• % hearings decisions issued within 180 days • % final actions on appeals of hearings decisions issued within 105 days • Average processing times for hearings decisions and for decisions on appeals of hearings • The substantial evidence support rate will be used to assess hearings decisional accuracy pending development of a new accuracy indicator • Number of hearings and appeals processed per workyear • Progress in establishing paperless processing capability

(Left margin label spanning the table:) **World-Class Service**

Employment Assistance:	Interim indicators: ● % increase in the number of DI beneficiaries who begin to work ● % increase in the number of SSI disabled beneficiaries whose payments are reduced because of work ● Progress in implementing provisions of the TWSSP and other employment strategies Long-term indicators: ● % increase over 1999 in the number of DI beneficiaries whose benefits are suspended/terminated due to substantial gainful activity ● % increase over 1999 in the number of SSI disabled beneficiaries who no longer receive cash benefits due to work (1619b status)
Service to Postentitlement Customers:	● Processing time, accuracy and efficiency indicators to be developed once the objective is more specifically defined ● Progress in establishing paperless processing capability
Service to SSN Customers:	● % SSNs issued within 5 days from the date all documentation is received ● SSN accuracy rate ● Efficiency indicator to be developed

Program/Process Evaluations

Evaluations Used to Inform Strategic Direction

In developing the objectives and strategies for this plan, SSA used information from our market measurement program to determine areas to target for improvement. According to customer feedback, the following areas provide the greatest opportunities for increasing customer satisfaction: clear and helpful mailings, 800 number and field office telephone access, field office waiting times and completing business at the first point of contact.

The Agency used the results of a number of studies and pilots to evaluate whether disability process redesign changes were producing the intended effects on customer service and to adjust our disability and hearings process objectives and strategies accordingly. Examples of these include: the adjudicative officer, disability claims manager and disability full process model studies.

The Agency also conducted ongoing quality assurance reviews of disability determinations, initial payments and telephone service to help determine strategies for improving service and payment accuracy.

Future Evaluations

The following table displays the major process or program evaluations scheduled for the 2001-2005 period.

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EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
Customer Segment Analyses	Assesses the needs, expectations and priorities of each major customer group	Triennially
Interaction Tracking Survey	Assesses customer satisfaction with service by mode of interaction—telephone, office visit, and the Internet	Twice Yearly
Employer Survey	Assesses employer satisfaction with SSA's service	Yearly
Employer Focus Groups	Assesses employer needs, expectations and priorities	Triennially
Disability Redesign Prototype Review	Evaluates results of the 10 State Disability Redesign Prototype	2001

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Strategic Goal: To ensure the integrity of Social Security programs, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse

SSA pays out almost $400 billion in benefits annually from taxpayer contributions to the trust funds and from general revenues. Social Security programs, which are designed to meet critical needs of the public, can themselves be threatened if the public perceives serious problems with program integrity. This goal reflects SSA's responsibility to protect taxpayer dollars from losses associated with fraud, abuse and payment error and otherwise be a good steward of the programs we administer.

The overall outcome of this goal is accurate payment of benefits, that is, the right people getting the right payment. Because the size and complexity of Social Security programs make it inevitable that some error will occur, we focus not only on making payments correctly to begin with but also on detecting and correcting errors as quickly as possible. When inaccuracies involve overpayments, our responsibilities require that we recover as much of the debt owed as possible.

In spite of our efforts to ensure that only those individuals who are eligible receive exactly the amounts due them, some individuals attempt to obtain benefits fraudulently. While there is no indication of widespread fraud associated with our programs, this goal underscores SSA's commitment to be vigilant in our efforts to combat fraud.

Objectives

1. Beginning 2001 and through 2005, maintain at 99.8 percent the accuracy based on non-medical factors of eligibility of OASDI payment outlays.

2. By 2005, raise to 97 percent the accuracy based on non-medical factors of eligibility of SSI disabled and aged payment outlays.

3. Become current with DI and SSI CDR [2] requirements by 2000 and 2002 respectively, and remain current thereafter.

4. Maintain timeliness and improve accuracy and efficiency in posting earnings data to Agency records. Specifically by 2005:
    - Increase to 70 percent the number of employee reports (W-2s) filed electronically

5. Through 2005, maintain a level of outstanding debt that is either in a repayment agreement, under appeal or newly detected.

    (We will set a numeric goal for this objective once baseline performance data is available.)

6. Aggressively deter, identify and resolve fraud.

Program Integrity

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[2] SSA performs continuing disability reviews (CDRs) to determine whether individuals receiving disability benefits have medically improved so that they are no longer considered disabled and eligible for benefits.

Program Integrity

Key External Factors and Major Management Challenges

The external factors affecting SSA's ability to fulfill our stewardship responsibilities are much the same as those affecting our ability to deliver world-class service. The growth in the number of beneficiaries on our rolls as the baby boomer generation ages and as life expectancy increases will create significantly more program integrity work. Changing technology will present new opportunities to work smarter in an electronic environment. At the same time, it will pose new challenges to maintaining the security and integrity of the information we possess. For example, our increased presence on the Internet will expose our systems to more security threats and will require that we develop new strategies to prevent any compromise or damage to our systems.

In addition to these new challenges, several existing issues will demand our continued attention, in particular: increasing SSI payment accuracy, identifying and addressing vulnerabilities to fraud, and decreasing the number of earnings reports unassociated with an individual's record. We have created strategies for achieving this goal with all of these challenges in mind.

SSA now dedicates about 25 percent of its administrative budget to ensure the integrity of records and payments and to protect the taxpayer's investment in the trust funds and the general funds. Even optimum use of technology will not wholly substitute for the human effort often required to maintain quality program management. In the competitive federal budget environment, we must make a strong case for adequate resources to handle our increasing workloads, demonstrating the savings that will accrue to the taxpayer from the

investments we make in program integrity work.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

Strategies for Increasing Payment Accuracy and Detecting Overpayments

- *Aggressively increase online, real-time access to data* held by other public and private organizations. In addition to enhancing customer service, electronic access to information is key to prevention and early detection of overpayments. It enables immediate verification of income, resources and other factors of eligibility before claims are adjudicated for payment, and quicker detection of unreported income and resources and other changes in circumstances that affect continuing payment amounts or eligibility for benefits. As indicated by our new objective under the World-Class Service goal, our efforts will focus on increasing access to State vital statistics, human services, unemployment and other material information, as well as to information held by other Federal agencies, financial institutions and medical providers.

- *Develop user-friendly expert decision support and on-line reference* systems with the latest processing instructions, policies and procedures to assist employees in making accurate eligibility and payment determinations.

- *Promote the need to invest additional resources in cost-effective initiatives to strengthen SSI and Disability program integrity.* These initiatives include CDRs, increased SSI redeterminations ,[3]

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[3] SSA conducts redeterminations to ascertain whether individuals receiving SSI benefits have had any

data matches to detect unreported income changes affecting SSI payments and other overpayment prevention and detection activities with potential for high return.

- *Continue to refine techniques* to better target CDRs and SSI redeterminations on cases with the greatest payoff.

- *Implement features of the disability process prototypes*, as discussed previously under the World-Class Service goal, to improve the quality of initial disability determinations.

Privacy and Security Strategies

- *Develop systems and implement processes that ensure the privacy and security of information maintained in our electronic records or provided to outside entities.* To minimize occurrences of unauthorized access leading to fraud, authentication of the individual or entity accessing SSA data will be ensured through such means as Public/Private Key Infrastructure (PKI), encryption, biometrics, smart cards, or other technological solutions. A comprehensive system of cross-references and data mining will help detect program abuses.

- *Strengthen our plans for ensuring continuation of essential business functions* during an emergency.

Strategies for Maintaining Earning Records

- *Increase electronic wage reporting* by providing electronic filers more and better access methods and support

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changes in their income and resources that affect payment amounts and eligibility to benefits.

services. Electronic filing provides the business community a more convenient and cost-effective way to file wage reports.

- *Reduce the size and rate of growth of the earnings suspense file.*[4] Our strategy includes working with the Internal Revenue Service and the business community on ways to reinforce the importance of accurate name and SSN reporting.

Strategies for increasing Debt Collections

- *Make maximum use of all debt collection tools* available by law, including: administrative offset against other Federal payments, Federal salary offset, referral of delinquent debtors to credit bureaus, use of private collection agencies, interest charging, wage garnishment and cross program recovery.

Strategies for Combating Fraud

- *Expand or accelerate existing projects that have demonstrated a high payoff in preventing and detecting fraud in the SSI and DI programs.*

- *Establish additional safeguards against SSN fraud.* We will complete a comprehensive review of the enumeration process to determine how best to balance SSN integrity concerns with service needs. From the integrity perspective, our goal is to end SSA's dependence on paper documents used to obtain an SSN. Toward this end, we will pursue initiatives with the State Bureaus of Vital Statistics and with the

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[4] SSA places an earnings report in a "suspense file" when we are unable to match the report to a valid name or SSN.

Program Integrity

Immigration and Naturalization Service—the sources of the documents the dishonest forge or misuse to obtain SSNs. We also are developing new fraud prevention software to interrupt the issuance of SSN cards in certain scenarios that have been determined to be fraud-prone.

- *Partner in government-wide efforts to combat identity theft* by disseminating information to employees and the public to help victims reclaim their identities.

- *Reduce the susceptibility of the representative payment program to fraud and abuse.* Our strategies for strengthening the representative payment program include educating payees,

beneficiaries and our workforce on representative payment procedures, developing more reliable payee selection, investigation and monitoring programs and expanding our onsite monitoring program. We also have drafted a legislative proposal that would provide additional safeguards for beneficiaries with representative payees, and enable us to promptly restore benefits misused by organizational payees.

- *Expand partnerships with Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies* in investigating and prosecuting fraud.

- *Expand civil monetary penalties.*

Program Integrity

How We Will Measure Results

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Payment Accuracy:	• Dollar accuracy of OASDI payment outlays • Dollar accuracy of SSI payment outlays
CDRs:	• % of multi-year CDR plan completed (indicator through 2002) • % of CDRs completed when due (ongoing indicator beyond 2002)
Earnings:	• % of wage items posted to individuals' records by September 30 • % of earnings posted correctly • % of employee reports (W-2s) filed electronically
Debt:	• New indicators under development
Fraud:	• Number of investigations conducted • OASDI dollar amounts reported from investigative activities • SSI dollar amounts reported from investigative activities • Number of criminal convictions

Program/Process Evaluations

Evaluations Used to Inform Strategic Direction

In developing strategies to address SSI high risk factors, SSA used information from ongoing SSI quality assurance reviews and the SSI redeterminations change rate study. The SSI redeterminations and continuing disability reviews (CDR) profiling studies provided data for developing strategies to maximize the cost effectiveness of redeterminations and CDRs. Also, many Inspector General audits in the areas of payment accuracy, earnings and fraud have contributed to shaping our strategies.

Future Evaluations

The following table displays the major process or program evaluations scheduled for the 2001-2005 period.

EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
CDR Report to Congress	Reports on SSA's progress in meeting CDR requirements under law and assesses effectiveness of CDRs	Annually
Suspension of Benefits to Fugitives	Assesses adequacy of procedures to identify fugitives receiving SSI benefits	2000-2001
Procedures for Verifying Evidentiary Documents	Assesses adequacy of procedures to ensure proper issuance of original SSNs	2000-2001
Assessment of Field Office Fraud Activities	Assesses adequacy of field office activities regarding fraud identification, reporting and investigation	2000-2001

Program Integrity

Strategic Goal: To be an employer that values and invests in each employee

The employees of SSA and the DDSs are truly our Agency's most important assets. There is no management priority higher than ensuring that our workforce is ready for the challenges we will face in the 21 st century. This goal recognizes that we must maintain a highly skilled, high performing and highly motivated workforce to achieve our mission. To meet this challenge, this goal strengthens our investment in human capital and implements real improvements in the way we manage and support our employees. It acknowledges the need to ensure that all employees, individually and collectively, understand and value the culture of our organization--a culture rooted in our traditional customer service values. The goal recognizes that we must incorporate the concepts of modern management. It reflects SSA's conviction that employees deserve a professional environment in which their dedication to the SSA mission and their own goals can flourish together.

Objectives

1. To recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, well-qualified, and satisfied workforce with the capacity to perform effectively in a changing future environment. Specifically*:*
   - By 2005, offer flexible benefits and workplace options to all employees,
   - By 2005, restructure direct service positions to provide operational flexibility and portability of work,
   - By 2002, partner with OPM to establish a process for accelerated advancement based on skills attainment and competency rather than time requirements.

2. To provide the necessary tools, training and continuous learning opportunities to maintain a highly skilled and high-performing workforce. Specifically:
   - By 2005, provide online training electronically at the desktop to all employees.
   - By 2005, have 1/3 of employees participating in job enrichment opportunities during each year.
   - By 2005, provide all employees the necessary competency-based training needed to maintain technical skills each year.

3. To provide a physical environment that promotes the health and well-being of every employee.

4. To promote an Agency culture that successfully incorporates our values. Specifically:
   - By 2005, attain a 50 percent improvement in the gap between the "current" and "desired" workplace practices and values.

Key External Factors and Major Management Challenges

Several key changes unfolding in the world--the changing face of our customers, the changing nature of work, and the changing character of the nation's workforce--will challenge SSA's ability to maintain a highly-skilled and high performing workforce.

Our customer base is becoming increasingly diverse, creating a greater potential for language, cultural and other barriers that we

must overcome to effectively communicate and provide services.

Technology is changing the nature of work and the workplace, increasing the breadth of skills and knowledge that will be needed by the future workforce and enabling work to be performed any time and any place. Changes in family structure and lifestyle choices are compelling workers to find security in their own skills rather than in one employer and to seek nontraditional work models such as flexible work schedules and locations, transitory and part time jobs, second and third careers.

A shrinking percentage of young people in the nation's labor pool coupled with continued high employment rates, is intensifying competition among employers for qualified workers. Flexible benefits, opportunities for lifelong learning and access to technology are becoming increasingly important to attract, retain and motivate the best workers.

These trends suggest that aggressive retooling of our workforce practices will be crucial to assuring SSA's future success.

At the same time, SSA will face a tremendous turnover in staff as large numbers of experienced employees start to retire. Our estimates show that retirements will peak in 2007-2009, at the same time SSA will face explosive growth in workloads as the baby boom generation ages. A major management challenge will be to ensure that we have experienced employees in our key position to handle these workloads. Adequate funding will be critical to our success in meeting this challenge, allowing the Agency to balance the need to meet our present workload demands with the need to build and train our workforce of the future.

The challenge of SSA's retirement wave also offers a unique opportunity for the Agency to reassess where staff are most needed, to direct our replacement hiring to those areas, to restructure jobs, and to promote continuous learning to align with our vision of how we will deliver service in 2010.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

Strategies for Recruiting a Diverse and Well-Qualified Workforce

- *Use innovative recruiting techniques.* To help ensure that our workforce reflects the diverse population that we serve, we will expand our recruitment sources to include a wider range of job candidates. The shrinking percentage of young people in the labor market creates the need to reach new pools of prospective candidates, for example experienced workers who want a second career or want to work part-time in specialized or high tech areas. To attract a wider variety of candidates, the Agency will fully utilize available recruitment and retention incentives. SSA will work closely with the Office of Personnel Management to move aggressively toward implementing additional incentives. We will also adapt our recruitment program, utilizing innovative marketing approaches, including the Internet and a recruitment cadre.

- *Create new strategies for recruiting and retaining personnel with highly specialized skills.* The dynamic technical environment will make it absolutely critical that we improve our competitive edge to attract and retain highly talented information technology employees with the most up-to-date

Valued Employees

technical skills. We will also design new recruitment strategies to fill other SSA staff positions that require unique and highly complex analytic skills.

- *Establish hiring competencies and an assessment interview process* for applicants for Agency positions. Employees conducting assessment interviews will be trained in the use of effective interviewing assessment tools. Managers across the country will have access to a well-maintained central SSA recruitment bank of qualified and screened job applicants.

- *Work with the Office of Personnel Management to simplify and improve the hiring process* so that we can hire more quickly and easily and better compete with other employers.

- *Ensure the administrative and resource capability to permit replacement hiring in advance of losses*, allowing new employees to receive the necessary training and mentoring from the more experienced employees immediately after entering on duty.

- *Accelerate retirements* through early retirement programs to help mitigate the effect of the projected peak year retirements, in effect "flattening the retirement wave." Replacing staff now and in the immediate years to come will be critical to having an experienced workforce in place when massive baby-boomer workloads hit.

Strategies for Developing a Diverse and Well-Qualified Workforce

- *Hire SSA retirees on a part-time basis to help us train and mentor the large number of new employees* we must hire.

- *Actively collaborate with our State agency partners* on strategies that may be mutually helpful in preparing for upcoming changes in our respective workforces.

- *Restructure existing direct service positions in the Agency.* The Agency will establish core job functions and competencies for the new restructured direct service positions.

- *Identify competencies and levels of performance for all positions, including the new restructured direct service positions.* As employees develop skills and competencies, they will have the direct opportunity to additionally take on higher-graded responsibilities that will involve more complex decisionmaking and independent judgment.

- *Take full advantage of personnel flexibilities* available for accelerated advancement based on individual employees' skill attainment, application and supervisory certification of skills and competencies, rather than time requirements.

Strategies for Retaining a Satisfied Workforce

- *Collect and use information on employee satisfaction* to make visible improvements that are meaningful to employees. We will test a new employee survey process for identifying satisfaction issues and developing local improvement plans.

- *Expand job enrichment opportunities*, including job sharing, rotational assignments, career development programs, details and cross-component team work. Developmental assignments

Valued Employees

will not only emphasize growth in skills and broad career training opportunities, but will also enhance the knowledge base and efficiency of the organization.

- *Expand available family-friendly features,* such as flexible work schedules, flexiplace options, childcare, elder care and fitness centers, to help us attract and retain employees. SSA will take full advantage of benefit and other workplace options that will appeal to a workforce with diverse needs.

- *Enable employees to assess their skills* and knowledge levels and take the training they have identified as needed.

Strategies for Providing Tools and Training

- *Develop a comprehensive national training curriculum*, including programmatic, administrative, end-user systems and other skills, leadership, and cultural training modules, and deliver electronically at an employee's desktop when he or she needs it. With the Intranet as a platform, training modules will be user-friendly, interactive and delivered just-in-time. They will ensure that employees possess the skills and competencies needed to meet the demands of SSA's technological environment. They will include self-assessment tools to evaluate the knowledge and skills acquired. Training modules will be made available from the on-line SSA training library via the Intranet.

- *Develop a comprehensive retraining and retooling program for the current workforce.* These training programs will focus on adding new skills and competencies to ensure job security.

- *Develop sophisticated expert and decision support systems* that will help employees do their work. Such systems will provide employees with information necessary to understand the complexities of policies and programs and will help them process a broader range of work without handoffs.

- *Provide career development programs* at the national, component and regional levels to help retain our best employees and prepare them for management, leadership and other positions.

Strategies for Providing a Safe and Secure Work Environment

- *Continue to pay special attention to completing and maintaining security, air quality and water quality improvements* in all of our work sites.

- *Assess employee satisfaction with the overall physical environment* (i.e., office health, safety and overall appearance) and develop an action plan to address satisfaction issues.

- *Expand and monitor security standards to include non-SSA locations where employees will be working* (e.g., telecommunication centers, community centers, community service agencies, etc.).

Strategies for Promoting a Culture that Successfully Incorporates our Values

- *Develop and implement a strategy to address the most pressing issues identified in the culture survey.* Using the baseline of the Agency's current culture, an intercomponent workgroup including employee and management association representation will

Valued Employees

recommend actions for addressing the areas with the largest gaps between SSA's current culture and what the employees think it should be.

- *Create an entrepreneurial environment* that encourages and rewards innovation and sound risk management.

How We Will Measure Results

Valued Employees

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Workforce:	• % of employees who are satisfied or very satisfied with SSA as a place to work • Milestones in accomplishing actions to meet future workforce needs • % of new hires who remain in service after 5 years
Tools and Training:	• Milestones in accomplishing actions to meet workforce training needs
Physical Environment:	• % of employees who are satisfied with the overall physical environment, i.e., it is professional, accessible, safe and secure
Agency Culture:	• % improvement in the gap between "current" and "desired" workplace practices and values (as measured by organizational culture surveys)

Program/Process Evaluations

Evaluations Used to Inform Strategic Direction

The results of the Organizational Culture survey are being used to develop change strategies for improving the alignment of the Agency's values with its culture throughout all parts of the Agency.

The Retirement Wave study provided predictive retirement data that has allowed the Agency to develop strategies to "flatten"

the retirement wave into a more manageable HR scenario over the next 10 years.

The Employee Satisfaction with Facility Security survey and the ongoing water quality and air quality surveys were used to develop strategies for improving our facilities' physical environment, safety and security.

Future Evaluations

The following table displays the major process or program evaluations scheduled for the 2001-2005 period.

EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
Employee Satisfaction with SSA as a Place to Work	Assesses the needs, expectations and priorities of employees	FY 2003
Employee Satisfaction with the Physical Environment	Assesses employee satisfaction with the physical environment	FY 2003
Water and Air Quality Surveys	Assesses environmental quality of facilities and identifies any items for corrective action	Ongoing
New Hire Selection Process/ Competencies	Assesses competencies as a focused method of recruiting and assessing job candidates	FY 2002 – 2003
Organizational Culture Study	Re-conduct organizational culture survey	FY 2002
Retirement Wave Study	Reviews actual attrition data and updates/revises attrition methodology in order to better predict future attrition	Annually
Survey of Training Effectiveness	Conducts regional onsite evaluations of training effectiveness by applying OPM's Employee Survey Questionnaire	Ongoing

Valued Employees

Strategic Goal: To strengthen public understanding of Social Security programs

Public Understanding

We have a responsibility to the American people to ensure that they understand the benefits available to them under the Social Security programs. An understanding of our programs, the financial value of those programs, and basic financing issues regarding Social Security can help people plan more effectively for their own financial future.

Over the next few years, Social Security will continue to be at the forefront of the national agenda. Educating the public about our programs has been, and will continue to be, a priority for this Agency. It is critical for Americans to understand the Social Security program of today if they are to help shape the Social Security program of tomorrow. Our communication activities must include traditional and innovative means to ensure that the public's knowledge of SSA's programs and services is up-to-date.

Objective

By 2005, 9 out of 10 Americans (adults age 18 and over) will be knowledgeable about Social Security programs in three important areas:

- Basic program facts
- Value of Social Security programs
- Financing Social Security programs

Key External Factors

We can already see the outlines of significant communications challenges that lay ahead. We must inform the public about critical issues regarding the future of Social

Security. We must respond to the needs of an American population that is increasingly diverse—racially, ethnically and culturally. Public understanding of the Social Security program is uneven, [5] and we are challenged to get our message out to those populations with comparatively lower knowledge levels about the Social Security programs and long-range finance issues. We must also address the intensified concerns about retirement financial planning among the "baby boom" generation. Finally, we must adapt our communications to the increased pace of technological change. The public's demand for accurate, meaningful, and "crisp" information on our programs is growing and their concerns regarding the privacy of personal records in the information age is a challenge that SSA must meet. Our strategy for increasing public understanding will address a variety of ways to answer these challenges.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

- *Promote awareness of the Social Security Statement* and how it can be used to plan a secure financial future. The Statement includes a report of the life-long earnings record maintained by SSA on each worker covered by Social Security and an estimate of the worker's potential future Social Security benefits. As required by law, in October 1999,

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[5] Data from the Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS) survey revealed that knowledge of Social Security is dependent upon demographic factors such as age, education and income. PUMS is an annual national survey that measures and tracks the public's knowledge of Social Security program facts, value and financing issues.

SSA began issuing annual Statements to all eligible workers age 25 and over for whom we can obtain a mailing address from the IRS. Our Public Understanding Measurement Systems (PUMS) indicates that persons who receive a statement have a significantly greater knowledge level than those who do not.

● *Strengthen public education programs by tailoring our messages and strategies* to educate all Americans about Social Security, with emphasis on demographic profiles that have a lower level of knowledge as reflected in the PUMS survey. We will strengthen community-based products and delivery systems to get our message across to unique customer groups. Additionally, we will increasingly use electronic means such as "Social Security E news to reach a large segment of the public, including younger workers.

● *Foster and enhance new and existing relationships with public interest and advocacy groups* through a robust program of community relations. SSA will seek out hard-to-reach segments of the population by partnering with community advocacy groups to better educate these Americans about Social Security.

● *Place special emphasis on educating the population that is considered to be "close to knowledgeable."* Determine

the extent to which knowledge of Social Security programs can be raised by specific, intensified SSA local public education activities through a series of regional surveys called the "Move the Needle" study. The Move the Needle Study is a series of quarterly surveys in selected geographic areas to determine the impact of specific, local SSA public education initiatives. The study will determine what communication activities are most effective in helping to increase knowledge of Social Security programs.

● *Develop a management information (MI) process* to measure the extent of communication activities within the Agency, and associate resources with these efforts. Ultimately, this will be a part of the unified work measurement system previously discussed under the world-class service goal. The MI system will provide data on the type of local public affairs activities and associated costs that will help us measure knowledge and the effectiveness of local public education initiatives at the local level.

● *Utilize the knowledge and skills of our employees.* We will continue to train every employee on basic program information so they may act as "ambassadors" for Social Security in their communities.

Public Understanding

How We Will Measure Results

OBJECTIVE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Public Understanding:	● % of public who are knowledgeable about Social Security programs ● % of individuals issued SSA-initiated Social Security Statements as required by law

Program Evaluations

Evaluations Used to Inform Strategic Direction

The PUMS was used to determine the baseline level of public knowledge of Social Security programs and the most effective strategies for improving public knowledge.

Future Evaluations

The following table displays the major process or program evaluations scheduled for the 2001-2005 period.

EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
Public Understanding Measurement System Survey	Public survey of adults age 18 and over to assess their knowledge of Social Security programs – National	Annually
Move the Needle Study	Public survey of adults age 18 and over to assess their knowledge of Social Security programs – Regional	Quarterly

Public Understanding

Part VIII -- Crosscutting Actions and Next Steps

Communicating Strategic Direction

An effective approach to communicating strategic direction is a crucial first step in achieving both the 2010 Service Vision, and the service and performance goals described in this strategic plan. In keeping with its information and education responsibilities to the public, SSA's Office of Communications has taken the lead in developing a long-term communications strategy to establish the Vision and the Agency Strategic Plan as primary points of reference, both for discussion and decisionmaking inside the Agency, and for sharing information with stakeholders and the public.

This communications plan is essential to assuring that all employees have the same, solid understanding of the Agency's overall direction, and more immediate goals, so that day-to-day activities and priorities can be decided in that context. Regional officials throughout the country are charged with establishing and maintaining that alignment, working through the staff and structures each has in place for carrying out their fundamental customer information and service responsibilities to the public.

Service Delivery Planning

Alignment is also established through comprehensive, effectively integrated plans. The first step in the Vision and planning was the reshaping of this Agency Strategic Plan. Included in this edition are redirected and new strategic objectives to mark our five-year progress toward 2010.

Work on implementing the vision will begin immediately with several initiatives in the areas of technology, training, upgrading of skills and positions and activities moving towards greater operational flexibility. These early initiatives will help to make the vision clear and real to those who are critical to its realization.

And as noted in the Vision, more detailed service delivery planning is required to define the sequence, timing, cost and approach for each aspect of the Vision. This planning will produce the specific initiatives that will flow from the Vision, through Agency planning processes, to feed subsequent tactical and annual performance plans.

Having established the unifying framework of the 2010 Vision, SSA can approach service delivery planning by creating plans for specific functions. Plans are already underway or shortly will be for process change, information technology, and human resources.

SSA's **process change** plans will further define the Vision by identifying what changes in business process functions, policies, service delivery methods and resource support will be needed for the next 5 – 7 year tactical period to achieve the strategic objectives and move toward realizing the Vision. The plans will include descriptions of the current and target processes, identification and sequencing of deliverables, and a balanced set of performance goals for each customer segment.

Immediate **human resource and information technology** plans will focus on features of the Vision that are not dependent on having fully defined business process changes, and the key activities and timelines for implementing them over the 5 – 7 year tactical period. As the process change plans

are completed, we will reshape the other plans around activities and timelines for delivering the necessary human resource and information technology support structures for 2010. As this first round of service delivery plans is completed, we will evaluate the need and timing to develop additional supporting direction for organizational, facilities, or other changes.

We do not expect either the Vision or our service delivery plans to be static. While our initial focus is on 2010, changing environmental factors will signal the need to make adjustments or develop alternative scenarios, and both our Vision and our supporting infrastructure plans will evolve beyond 2010. At a minimum, and more frequently as environmental factors warrant, SSA will refresh the Vision on a three-year schedule cycling about twelve months ahead of the ASP schedule. Service delivery plans will be evaluated and refreshed in concert with Vision and ASP adjustments.

Accountability

SSA based implementation of its 1997 strategic plan on a concept of executive "ownership" of strategic objectives, an accountability structure that emphasizes results as opposed to our earlier focus on managing supporting projects and initiatives. To align and implement both the 2010 Vision and this strategic plan, we intend to build on this orientation to results. We will retain the basic concept in which accountable executives or teams of executives are designated for some of our strategic objectives.

The remaining strategic objectives, those directly related to the business processes that will come under our process change plans, will be included in the responsibilities of executives designated as accountable for the entire business process. These executive "process owners" will lead development of the process change plans described above, and assume ongoing sponsorship responsibilities for all related strategic objectives. This structure will strengthen our progress toward 2010 and signal our commitment to the concept of horizontal management articulated in the Service Vision.

APPENDIX A

BAROMETER MEASURES

A strategic plan should attempt to assess an organization's performance in terms of outcomes achieved as well as outputs produced. After all, SSA's mission is to promote the economic security of the nation's people, not just to issue benefit checks or write policy analyses. SSA's programs, however, are not the only factors that affect the economic status of the aged, disabled, and survivor populations. Personal choices, social attitudes, and the economic climate also play important roles. Thus, it is not feasible for the agency to establish numerical goals for levels of income, rates of poverty, or similar measures.

Although we cannot set goals for these measures, SSA has committed itself to identifying and defining quantitative indicators to assess the outcomes of the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. SSA will use these indicators (termed barometer measures) to analyze the programs' effects on the economic security of the nation's people, especially vulnerable groups, and to help formulate options for strengthening the programs. The barometer measures will also guide future research and policy development.

The tables in this appendix describe the barometer measures in detail. Here are some highlights.

Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program

- OASDI benefits greatly reduce the portion of aged beneficiaries in poverty and keep a significant portion of beneficiaries of all ages out of poverty.

- Many people rely heavily on Social Security. A majority of beneficiaries aged 65 or older and 44 percent of beneficiaries aged 18 to 64 receive half or more of their family income from Social Security.

- Most workers are covered for Social Security:

  - 96 percent of people aged 62 or over are eligible for benefits.

  - 84 percent of men and 73 percent of women aged 20 to 64 are insured for disability benefits.

- Low-wage workers receive higher benefits relative to their earnings, but workers with higher earnings receive larger benefits in dollar terms.

Supplemental Security Income Program

- SSI payments decrease the monthly poverty gap for recipients by 61 percent.

- SSI provides half or more of total income for 38 percent of aged beneficiaries and 66 percent of beneficiaries aged 18 to 64.

- Several states supplement federal SSI benefits to push income closer to the poverty level.

Using the Barometer Measures

No single measure can capture the impact of Social Security's programs. These measures should be considered in relation to one another and to external economic, social, and other factors. The agency will issue summaries and analyses of the measures periodically. The barometers presented represent SSA's initial work to identify meaningful barometer measures to assess the programs. We will revise and improve the measures based on our own analyses and on comments we receive and provide updated data in SSA's Annual Performance Report.

Two changes are already in progress. First, the estimated Social Security replacement rates are based on hypothetical workers at three earnings levels. The data clearly make the point that lower earners receive higher replacement rates. However, the hypothetical workers are just that and do not represent actual earners. Work is underway to profile actual workers and their work records so that we can provide an estimate of replacement rates for actual workers at retirement.

Second, we are developing a barometer to present the participation rate of the aged who are eligible for the SSI program. Initial estimates, using data from 1991, indicate participation rates of 57 percent to 68 percent. Actual payments in 1991 represented 66 percent to 78 percent of the dollars that would have been paid if all of those eligible were participating. We are working to improve our estimates for this barometer and to use more current data.

The preliminary measures presented here focus on the roles of public programs in the aggregate. In the future, we will break them down by age, race, and gender. We also intend to develop additional barometer measures relating to private provision for retirement, such as personal saving, pension coverage, and labor force participation.

OASDI BAROMETER MEASURES FOR POVERTY STATUS

OASDI Beneficiaries In Poverty

Age	Percent of Group Below Poverty	Number of People in Poverty (Millions)
65+	8.5	2.5
18 - 64	18.3	1.5
Children	24.9	1.3

NOTE: Beneficiaries aged 65+ and 18 - 64 are individuals who report receiving Social Security. Beneficiaries under age 18 are children in families who report receiving Social Security. Poverty is based on family money income, not including nonmoney transfers such as food stamps.

Source: March 1999 Current Population Survey (CPS), for 1998.

OASDI Beneficiaries Raised Above Poverty By Social Security

Age	Percent Raised Above Poverty by Social Security	Percent Who Would Be Poor Without Social Security
65+	39	48
18 - 64	27	46
Children	17	42

NOTE: Beneficiaries aged 65+ and 18 - 64 are individuals who report receiving Social Security. Beneficiaries under age 18 are children in families who report receiving Social Security. Poverty is based on family money income, not including nonmoney transfers such as food stamps.

Source: March 1999 CPS, for 1998.

BAROMETER MEASURES FOR RELIANCE ON OASDI BENEFITS

Social Security As A Percent Of Total Family Income

Percent Who Rely on Social Security for:

Age	Half or More Of Total Income	90% or More Of Total Income	100% Of Total Income
65+	56	22	14
18 - 64	44	20	15

NOTE: Counts the family Social Security income of persons aged 18 and older as a percent of the family's total income. A regular SSA data series presents somewhat different figures for those 65 or older counting individuals and married couples based on their own Social Security benefits as a percent of their own income. The numbers under that calculation are 63, 30, and 18 percent. We use a different method here so that age groups are measured similarly and because the method used for the aged is not appropriate for younger groups.

Source: March 1999 CPS, for 1998.

Percent Of Income From Social Security And Percent Of All Social Security Dollars Paid

Income Quintiles	Percent of Income from Social Security		Percent of All Social Security Dollars Paid	
	65+	18-64	65+	18-64
Lowest	89	83	12	12
Second	74	67	18	19
Third	59	46	22	22
Fourth	39	30	23	23
Highest	18	15	26	24

NOTE: Counts persons based on family money income quintiles and family reliance on Social Security. A regular SSA data series presents somewhat different figures for those 65 or older counting individuals and married couples based on their own income quintiles and their own reliance on social security. The numbers under that calculation are 82, 81, 64, 45, 18%. We use a different method here so that age groups are measured similarly and because the method used for the aged is not appropriate for younger persons. The family income quintile limits for those aged 65 or older are $12,535/$20,179/$30,031/$50,000; the family income quintiles for those aged 18 - 64 are $11,058/$19,948/$32,006/$50,206.

Source: March 1999 CPS, for 1998.

BAROMETER MEASURES FOR OASDI ELIGIBILITY

Population Aged 62 Or Older Eligible For OASDI Benefits

	Percent Eligible	Number Eligible (in millions)
Total	96	39.8
Male	93	16.6
Female	97	23.2

Source: Estimate of SSA Office of the Chief Actuary, 1999.

Percent Of Women Aged 65 Or Older Receiving OASDI Benefits

Retired Worker Only	36.2
Dually Entitled	28.6
Wife	11.4
Widow	17.1
Wife or Widow Only	35.3
Wife	12.9
Widow	22.4

NOTE: Total number of women aged 65 or older receiving OASDI benefits is 18.96 million.

Source: Master Beneficiary Record (MBR), December 1999.

Percent Who Meet Work Requirements To Be Insured For Disability Benefits

Percent Eligible

Age	Male	Female
20 - NRA	84	73
20 - 49	84	75
50 - 61	85	71
62 - NRA	78	59

NOTE: NRA = Normal Retirement Age

Source: Estimate of the SSA Office of the Chief Actuary, 1999.

BAROMETER MEASURES ON DI BENEFICIARIES RETURNING TO WORK

DI Beneficiaries Who Are Working

	Number	**Percent of All DI Beneficiaries**
Working and Receiving Benefits	Number being developed	Number being developed
Benefits Ceased Due to Work Above the SGA Level	10,000	0.2

NOTE: SGA = Substantial Gainful Activity--$500 per month for the first six months of 1999 and $700 per month thereafter

Source: MBR, 1999.

OASDI BAROMETERS ON ADEQUACY AND EQUITY OF BENEFITS

Hypothetical Retiree Replacement Rates At NRA

Benefits at Normal Retirement Age as a Percent of Last Year's Earnings Assuming Wages for All Years Were:

MINIMUM* WAGE	AVERAGE WAGES	MAXIMUM TAXABLE EARNINGS
68%	39%	24%

* Many retirees, particularly women, have years with no earnings or work part time and earn less than the minimum wage. Assuming wages for all years were three-fourths of the minimum wage, the replacement rate would be 77 percent.

Source: Calculation by SSA Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, 1999.

Average Actual Primary Insurance Amounts (PIA) And Monthly Benefits Paid For New Retired Workers, By Income Quintile

Income Quintiles	Monthly Average		Yearly Average	
	PIA	Benefit	PIA	Benefit
Lowest	$ 343	$ 349	$ 4,116	$ 4,188
Second	$ 629	$ 558	$ 7,548	$ 6,696
Third	$ 892	$ 794	$10,704	$ 9,528
Fourth	$1,181	$1,058	$14,172	$12,696
Highest	$1,386	$1,212	$16,632	$14,544

NOTE: About one-third of the lowest quintile is dually entitled to worker and spouse benefits; thus the monthly benefit is somewhat higher than the PIA. Dual entitlements in the four other quintiles are minimal. Benefits are generally less than PIAs on account of reduction for early retirement.

Source: MBR, benefits newly awarded in 1999.

SSI BAROMETER MEASURES FOR POVERTY STATUS

Poverty Gap With And Without SSI

Age	Monthly Without SSI (millions)	Poverty Gap With SSI (millions)	Percent Reduction in Gap Due to SSI
All	$2,390	$936	61
Under 18	$ 273	$107	61
18 - 64	$1,631	$655	60
65+	$ 486	$174	64

NOTE: The poverty gap is the dollars needed to bring income of SSI recipients to the poverty level. Poverty is based on family money income in a 1-month period, not including nonmoney transfers such as food stamps. SSI amounts from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) have been replaced with SSI federal and federally administered state supplemental payments from SSA's program records that have been matched to the SIPP.

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and SSA program records, March 1997.

BAROMETER MEASURES FOR RELIANCE ON SSI BENEFITS

SSI As A Percent Of Total Income

Percent Who Rely on SSI for:

Age	Half or More of Total Income	90% or More of Total Income	100% of Total Income
Under 18	99.7	98	96
18 - 64	66	47	42
65+	38	22	19

NOTE: Counts the person's SSI as a percent of the person's total money income in a 1-month period, not including nonmoney transfers such as food stamps. SSI amounts from SIPP have been replaced with SSI federal and federally administered state supplementary payments from SSA's program records that have been matched to the SIPP.

Source: SIPP And SSA program records, March 1997.

BAROMETER MEASURES ON SSI BENEFICIARIES RETURNING TO WORK

Disabled SSI Recipients Aged 18-64 Who Are Working

	Working Above Substantial Gainful Activity	Working at or Below Substantial Gainful Activity	Total Working	All Disabled Recipients
Number	25,000	232,000	257,000	3,691,000
Percent of All Disabled Recipients	0.7	6.3	7.0	NA
Average Gross Monthly Earnings	$928	$218	$287	NA

Source: Supplemental Security Record (SSR), December 1999.

Disabled SSI Recipients Aged 18-64 Whose Benefits Ceased Due To Work

Recipients Whose Benefits Ceased:

Number	Percent of all SSI Recipients	Percent of all Workers
16,010	.4	5.0

NOTE: Number of recipients whose benefits (cash and/or Medicaid) ceased during the quarter ending March 31, 2000. These data are reported quarterly. Quarterly numbers cannot be added together because this would produce an overcount of people who start and stop work multiple times during a year.

Source: SSR, 2000.

SSI BAROMETERS ON ADEQUACY OF BENEFITS

SSI As A Percent Of The Poverty Threshold In States With "Broad Coverage" State Supplement Groups

	Number in a Broad SSI Coverage Group (thousands)	Percent of All State Recipients	SSI Annual Income Level*	SSI as Percent of Poverty Threshold for One Person
California	786	75	$8,112	95
Massachusetts	80	48	$7,548	90
Michigan	193	90	$6,168	73
New Jersey	110	75	$6,372	75
New York	313	51	$7,044	83
Pennsylvania	238	86	$6,324	74
Federal Benefit	6,557	NA	$6,000	71

* Federal SSI plus federally administered state supplements in the above states for one person

NOTE: A broad coverage group includes persons with the most common type of living arrangement within each state, which varies from state to state. Individuals in such living arrangements receive an SSI federally administered state supplement together with the federal payment that moves them closer to the poverty threshold than the federal payment alone.

Source: SSR and data from States, 1999.

APPENDIX B

SSA's CONSULTATION PROCESS

The process of consultation contributing to this plan had three major components: 1) the ongoing process of consultation, 2) consultation specific to the 2000 Agency Strategic Plan, and 3) consultation specific to the 2010 Vision. While stakeholder groups and individuals have a variety of concerns and would like to see different emphases in our plans, we are confident that this plan represents a balanced approach to the sometimes competing views of our stakeholders.

Ongoing Process of Consultation

SSA regularly consults with and obtains input from stakeholders as an important component of our ongoing process of strategic management. Each of our five major business processes, as well as the various programmatic policy areas, are likely to continue to be of interest to various stakeholder groups. The highlights of our ongoing consultation process are described below:

- The Market Measurement Program (MMP) seeks to determine the service needs, expectations and satisfaction of our customers, stakeholders and employees. We collect customer data through a variety of different activities which include focus groups, in-depth surveys, interaction tracking, special studies, comment cards, and the "Talking and Listening to Customers" (TLC) System which began pilot testing in September 2000.

- We collect information from our major stakeholders, including Congress and other oversight authorities, management associations, unions and other business partners, through periodic interviews, either in person or over the phone, about perceptions of SSA in areas relating to the delivery of service. In addition, we solicit input by means of presentations to, and discussions with, stakeholder organizations and community groups. Examples include: forums held to discuss privacy issues; meetings to obtain input on Plans for Achieving Self Support; forums on issues affecting women, minorities, young workers and non-English speaking customers; and "brown bag" lunches and roundtable discussions with community leaders.

- We also collect information from our employees. Following in the footsteps of the Agency-wide organizational culture survey that covered topics related to workplace practices, values and work climate, is another survey to learn if employees believe they have the tools, support and motivation to provide world-class service. This survey is different in that it focuses on satisfaction issues determined or influenced at the local level. Through a new program called SMART (SSA's Mandate Against Red Tape), we are asking employees to identify rules or procedures that get in the way of efficient and effective business, and to help us remove unneeded "red tape".

- SSA has established a National Partnership Council with AFGE as a forum for discussing and reviewing issues of mutual concern. Partnership councils have been established at lower levels throughout the organization as well.

- SSA holds quarterly management meetings with managers throughout the organization to monitor progress toward our annual performance goals and obtain feedback on Agency implementation of strategies and key change initiatives.

- The Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS) is used to determine how well the general public (taxpayers and future beneficiaries) understands our programs and to identify changes occurring from our education activities.

- SSA policymakers and process designers regularly consult with other Federal and State entities with which we share customers and stakeholders. A list of our partnerships with major Federal agencies is included in Appendix C.

- SSA regularly solicits input from visitors to SSA's Internet homepage, which is then shared with policymakers to be considered in the development of the full range of SSA's products and processes.

- Oversight agencies, most notably the General Accounting Office and SSA's Inspector General, regularly review and audit SSA's processes; through a formal, established process, SSA responds to findings and recommendations and initiates action to implement recommendations where appropriate.

Consultation Specific to the 2000 ASP and the 2010 Vision

In order to hear our customer and stakeholder voices and consider their views in setting our strategic direction, SSA took the following steps:

External Stakeholders

- Solicited written input from external stakeholders for their reaction to our goals and objectives and ideas for addressing future workload challenges for the 2000 ASP (May 1999)

- Interviewed GAO and OMB about the major issues to be addressed in the 2000 ASP (May - June 1999)

- Briefed the Advisory Board about our approach to developing the 2000 ASP (July 1999)

- Conducted focus groups with external stakeholders to obtain their reaction to our goals and objectives and ideas for addressing future workload challenges for the 2000 ASP (August - October 1999)

- Briefed the House Ways and Means Committee about our approach to developing the 2000 ASP and the 2010 Vision (January 2000)

- Conducted focus groups with future SSA customers (ages 20 through 55) to get their thoughts on how service should be delivered in 2010 (February - March 2000)

- Congressional hearing on service delivery (April 2000)

- Obtained the views of business and public interest group experts and government experts in the fields of technology, human resources, and customer and employee privacy about 2010 (April - June 2000)

- Held a forum with national advocacy groups representing women, the disabled, diverse racial and ethnic groups, labor, finance, retirees and other aged people, young people, religious organizations, and the Advisory Board to obtain their views about how SSA should provide service in 2010 (June 2000)

- Made the draft Agency Strategic Plan available for comment by other Federal Agencies via the Internet (August 2000)

- Consulted with Congressional staffs (August 2000)

- Consulted with the Office of Management and Budget (August 2000)

Internal Stakeholders

- Interviewed executives and union and management association leadership about what challenges need to be addressed in the 2000 ASP (May - June 1999)

- Held a conference with executives, union and management association leadership, and our State partners to identify issues to be addressed in the 2000 ASP (June 1999)

- Conducted focus groups with SSA employees and managers, and State Disability Determination Service employees to obtain their reaction to our goals and objectives and ideas for addressing future workload challenges for the 2000 ASP (May - July 1999)

- Obtained reaction from employees and management through Interactive Video Training sessions about our goals and objectives and ideas for addressing future workload challenges for the 2000 ASP (June - July 1999)

- Obtained reaction from employees and management through the Intranet about our goals and objectives and ideas for addressing future workload challenges for the 2000 ASP (June - August 1999)

- Held a conference with executives, unions, management associations, employee advisory groups, and our State partners to develop strategic guidance for the 2000 ASP (November 1999)

- Conducted over 50 sessions throughout the country with SSA employees, organizations that represent them, and State Disability Determination Service employees to get their ideas on how SSA should serve the public in the year 2010 (February - March 2000)

- Held a conference with executives, unions, management associations, employee advisory groups, our State partners, and the Advisory Board to discuss the major themes to be addressed in the 2010 Vision (April 2000)

- Held a conference with executives, unions, management associations, employee advisory groups, our State partners, and the Advisory Board to obtain their reaction to the draft 2010 Vision (July 2000)

APPENDIX C

SSA's FEDERAL BUSINESS PARTNERS

SSA has established numerous ongoing working relationships with other agencies in the Federal sector. Many of the relationships we pursue assist us in accomplishing our mission and help other agencies accomplish theirs. The character of these relationships range from simple data exchange through program coordination to actual processing of each other's work. In addition, SSA participates in a number of Executive Branch councils and interagency communities formed to search for improvements in practices government-wide. We will continue to coordinate with other agencies to prevent conflicting goals, eliminate redundancy, and find new opportunities for giving better value to the public.

The following list, organized by goal, is not comprehensive. Many other types of work may be done in cooperation with the organizations mentioned below, and occasional work may be done with other organizations as well. Nor have we attempted to present an exhaustive list of agencies that provide Federal organizations with administrative guidance or oversight.

Responsive Programs

In contributing to the economic security of our nation's people, SSA's programs intersect with those of many other Federal agencies. We have numerous standing relationships to coordinate programs that are directed toward common populations. In addition, we form ad hoc partnerships as particular program policy issues arise. The following highlights major areas related to research and program policy that we are coordinating with other agencies:

- SSA is one of many Federal agency members of a National Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, created by Executive Order and led by the *Department of Labor* (DOL), to coordinate an aggressive national policy to bring adults with disabilities to gainful employment.

- Return-to-work research is being coordinated with *DOL* and the *Department of Education* (ED).

- SSA provides research and policy analysis on program issues on an ongoing basis to *Congress* and the *Office of Management and Budget.*

- SSA participates with several Federal agencies (i.e., *National Institute on Aging, Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census*) in planning surveys that provide essential background information for policy research and analysis. These include the Survey of Income and Program Participation and the Pension Supplement to the Current Population Survey, the Health and Retirement Survey and AHEAD, the National Longitudinal Surveys of Women, and a survey of the homeless population.

- SSA provides data to other agencies for various research purposes, including the *Veterans' Affairs* for outreach evaluation, *Congressional Budget Office* for analysis of legislative

proposals, *General Accounting Office* for legislative analysis and for special requests for Congress, and the *Bureau of the Census* for improved population estimates.

● SSA collaborates with many Federal agencies, such as the *Department of Health and Human Services*, the *Bureau of the Census*, and the *Department of Agriculture* in assessing the effects of welfare reform legislation on participation in SSI, DI and other government programs.

● SSA has in place Technical Support Groups that include both government and academic experts to provide independent technical comments that will ensure high quality output from evaluation contracts.

● SSA participates in several collaborative efforts to improve our Federal statistical systems and reduce burden and cost. Activities include meeting with subject-matter groups such as those related to aging, children and families and disability, developing data in the health and welfare area, discussing measurement issues such as an improved poverty index, sharing concerns about confidentiality and data access, and disseminating Federal statistics through a common site on the Internet.

● SSA will work with the *Centers for Disease Control* to test a new disability classification system.

● SSA co-chairs conferences with other Federal agencies, such as the *Department of Education*, focusing on enhancing work opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

World Class Service

SSA has numerous partnerships with other Federal agencies which provide more convenient and effective service to the many customers we share. These range from sharing information to the actual processing of each other's work and include:

● *Department of Education*--SSA depends upon vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies funded and administered by ED. Note: SSA also reimburses State agencies for services provided to certain disability beneficiaries.

● *Department of the Treasury*--SSA assigns SSNs to individuals of all ages; permitting individuals to submit and be claimed as dependents on tax returns and for other uses in tax enforcement/collection. SSA provides IRS forms 1099 and 1042 to individuals for use in reporting taxable Social Security benefits. Using information provided by SSA, Treasury prepares paper Social Security/SSI checks and information for direct-deposit benefit payments. Treasury also handles international direct deposit in foreign countries.

● *Department of Health and Human Services*--SSA performs work related to entitlement to Hospital Insurance and Supplementary Medical Insurance on behalf of HCFA (e.g., Medicare enrollment, premium billing and adjustments). SSA determinations of disability are controlling for State decisions concerning Medicaid eligibility and SSA determinations of

SSI eligibility create automatic entitlement to Medicaid coverage in States that enter into agreements with SSA under section 1634 of the Social Security Act.   SSA is testing ways of providing integrated services at the State and local levels to help beneficiaries with disabilities to work in partnership with the States, HHS and the Department of Labor . SSA and HCFA are working together to increase enrollment in Medicare Part B buy-in programs and the State-option Medicaid program for working disabled people.

- *Department of Labor*--SSA and DOL have instituted a cooperative arrangement in administration of the Black Lung program. SSA is testing ways of providing integrated services at the State and local levels to help beneficiaries with disabilities to work in partnership with the States, HHS and DOL .

- *Department of Agriculture*--SSA and Agriculture coordinate on the verification of eligibility status of food stamp applications and joint eligibility processing under SSI. SSA field offices take some applications for food stamps. SSA also shares information with State agencies that administer the USDA food stamp program.

- *Department of the Interior*--SSA works with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to coordinate provision of local services at the reservation level.

- *Department of Justice*--SSA works closely with Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to ensure the accuracy of SSNs assigned to aliens. Efforts are under way to transfer to INS the collection of enumeration information for some aliens in order to provide one-stop service for aliens applying for SSNs. This will enhance overall government efficiency as well as the integrity of the SSN enumeration process. SSA is working with INS to implement an enumeration-at-entry program to allow non-citizens to apply for an SSN as a part of the immigration process. SSA and U.S. attorneys coordinate the defense of the Commissioner in appeals of SSA eligibility and payment decisions in the Federal courts.

- *Department of State*--Foreign Service Posts do work for SSA overseas, including taking claims for benefits. We are working to transfer to DOS collection of enumeration information for some visa applicants as part of the enumeration process.

- *Department of Veterans Affairs*--SSA and VA exchange data regarding veterans benefits and use each other's medical findings to adjudicate claims. VA uses SSA disability decisions in its claims process. SSA provides VA information and technical assistance related to payment of VA benefits payable to survivors of persons who died in or as a result of military service. SSA and VA coordinate services in some veterans' hospitals.

- *Federal Court System*--Appeals of SSA eligibility and payment decisions are heard and decided in the Federal courts; courts handle recovery of court-ordered restitutions.

- *Federal Interagency Coordinating Council*--SSA is one of several Federal agency members of the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council (FICC) for young children with disabilities. The FICC was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to facilitate coordination of resources at the Federal level and to model interagency coordination

for the purpose of strengthening the service system for young children with disabilities and their families. Participating agencies include DOL, Housing and Urban Development, VA and HCFA.

● *Federal Reserve System*--Payments to be made via electronic funds transfer are effected through information passing through the Automated Clearinghouse.

● *Government Information Technology Services Board*--SSA is working with other Federal agencies to develop a policy and legal framework for employees and citizens to use in conducting government business electronically. SSA expects to pilot several customer services on the Internet with Treasury, VA and GSA to test the framework.

● *Legal Services Corporation*--Legal services programs provide representation for SSA claimants and beneficiaries in the applications and appeals processes.

● *National Automated Clearinghouse Association (NACHA)*--SSA is participating with financial institutions, Treasury and certain States to develop a policy and legal framework that can be used for the government to conduct business using electronic means.

● *Presidential Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities*--SSA, in partnership with the Task Force, is testing proactive ways for helping young SSI disabled beneficiaries transition from school to work.

● *U.S. Postal Service*--USPS provides benefit-check and notice delivery and associated services as well as address change notifications/verifications.

Program Integrity

SSA is a major repository of information that is valuable to the business of other agencies, and we ourselves depend on data created and maintained by others to ensure the accuracy of payment under the Social Security programs. Therefore, we have established numerous standing data exchange relationships. Our major partners in program integrity activities include the following:

● *Department of the Treasury*--SSA provides actual earnings data on which Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) and Self-Employment Contributions Act (SECA) taxes are due so Treasury can adjust trust fund balances appropriately. SSA and Treasury exchange data regarding, for example, enforcement, SSI income, and the Continuous Work History Sample. Treasury provides SSA with debt-collection services through the Treasury Offset Program, a more comprehensive program that supersedes the tax-refund-offset program. The Secret Service assists SSA in check loss/fraud investigations.

● *Internal Revenue Service*--SSA receives reports of self-employment income from IRS. SSA posts the wages and self-employment income of every employed person in the nation; IRS uses the data in processing individual income-tax returns. IRS assigns employer identification numbers (EIN), used by SSA in earnings processing; SSA assigns statistical codes to the EIN applications, which allows them to be used by SSA for policy research

activities and by IRS for improving tax administration. SSA uses IRS data for enforcement matching to verify actual earnings against projections. We are working with IRS on ways to reinforce the importance of accurate name and SSN reporting.

- *Department of Health and Human Services*--SSA and HCFA exchange data regarding Medicaid eligibility. HCFA provides data to SSA on nursing homes admissions. The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) provides data to SSA on wages, unemployment compensation and new hires.

- *Department of Labor*--SSA uses information regarding workers' compensation to ensure the accuracy of disability benefit payments. SSA provides earnings data to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which they use in calculating the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The CPI-W, in turn, is used to annually adjust benefits for beneficiaries of Social Security and other programs.

- *Department of Defense*--SSA and DOD exchange data regarding military retirement.

- *Department of Education*--ED and SSA exchange data regarding student loans.

- *Department of Justice*--Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) notifies SSA of deportations so that program benefits can be suspended as appropriate. As part of our efforts to establish additional safeguards against SSN fraud, we will pursue initiatives with the State Bureaus of Vital Statistics and with INS to end SSA's dependence on paper documents used to obtain an SSN. Bureau of Prisons provides information to SSA regarding incarcerated felons to help SSA ensure payment accuracy. U.S. Attorneys prosecute Social Security fraud and handle SSA civil suits for recovery of debts.

- *Department of State*--Foreign Service posts perform validation activities relating to Social Security beneficiaries living abroad.

- *Department of Veterans' Affairs*--SSA and VA exchange data regarding veterans' benefits.

- *Federal Court System*--The Federal courts handle recovery of court-ordered restitutions.

- *Office of Personnel Management*--SSA and OPM exchange data regarding civil service retirement.

- *Railroad Retirement Board*--SSA maintains earnings files on which RRB benefits are based; the Social Security and Medicare trust funds are parties to a financial interchange with the Railroad Retirement Fund.

Valued Employees

- SSA is working with the *Office of Personnel Management* on improving personnel practices in several areas, including implementing additional recruiting incentives, simplifying and improving the hiring process and developing workforce planning models.

Public Understanding

- SSA obtains addresses from the *Internal Revenue Service* to issue annual Social Security Statements to all eligible workers age 25 and over.